Old Sins in New Clothes

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OLD SINS IN NEW CLOTHES

BY

GEORGE CLARKE PECK

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In
Filial Memory of
A Methodist Preacher
Whose
Glad Gift of Himself to Others
Through a Ministry of Thirty-Five Years
Has Made Many
Rich
Toward God

10,503

FOREWORD

It is frequently said—I read it recently from the pen of a talented pastor—that modern folks are tired of ancient "worthies;" that Abraham and Moses have been supplanted in popular interest by later lawgivers and leaders; that the pulpit would best drop Elijah and Isaiah for such newer prophets as Emerson and Tolstoi; that David and Peter as characteristic sinners have been overworked. The new age, I am told, is glad to give Bible heroes and transgressors a rest. Even the beautiful story of Jesus and His love is pronounced too old and familiar to bear frequent repetition in modern ears.

I do not find it so. Since when has it become true that an old story is therefore antiquated? Modern children still hang breathless on the recital of the same old fairy tales. Napoleon is not less moving figure because a century has passed since

Saint Helena. Cæsar was not too ancient to furnish the theme for one of Shakespeare's masterpieces. Lew Wallace succeeded in making an old drama quite vivid enough to sell *Ben-Hur* by the hundred thousand. And within the past few weeks people have been paying fabulous prices for a chance to hear Wagner's musical phrasing of a legend as old as Christianity.

Nothing is fresher than an old story freshly told. In my experience people are still quite willing to hear all about Enoch and Daniel and Jesus, providing the preacher will take time and blood to translate the old story into the language which modern folks are speaking. The Bible messages are deathless. They need not retirement, but simply rephrasing. Hall Caine says that his most successful novels have been founded upon Scripture incident. If, then, a modern novelist, writing for present-day readers, finds the old well still freshly flowing, it would seem that

a modern pastor might be able to bring from the same well a sparkling draught for his congregation. But he must know two books—the Book of Life and the book of human lives.

This little volume is not a sample of what I mean: it is only an effort toward what I hold as an ideal. It may even be more instructive as warning than as model. No one will see its deficiencies quite so keenly as does the author. But the messages here printed helped some weary hearts to find comfort, and some wanderers to reach home.

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I

THE AFTERMATH OF A GREAT EXPERIENCE

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die.—1 Kings xix, 4.

THE AFTERMATH OF A GREAT EXPERIENCE

ELIJAH doubtless thought that with the glorious issue of the scene on Mount Carmel his stressful days were past. Years earlier he had come out of obscurity to be God's voice to a dissolute and cruel court. The intervening time had been full of peril and privation. Once he had been miraculously saved by the ministries of ravens. Again, he had come up to Zarephath to beg a cup of water and a rustic cake from a woman already starving. But with the outcome of the extraordinary scene upon Mount Carmel his troubles must have seemed at an end. He was no longer a mere voice, no longer poor and unaccredited. At his word had fire swept down from heaven to consume his sacrifice. By his unaided sword the priests of Baal had met their doom. He stood before the wondering throng, almost a god himself, shaping their mood

like plastic metal—the greatest man in Israel that day. Ahab was cowed, if not converted. Bright, indeed, must have been the vista which lay open before the victorious prophet's eye—a kingdom reclaimed, rededicated. Surely the storm and night were past.

Alas! that Elijah could see so short a reach ahead. Whatever his perceptive gifts, he failed to make account of one disturbing fact: Jezebel the terrible was still alive, and Ahab turned home from Carmel to recount to her the day's doing. The full issue was not clear until Jezebel's mood was known. Women cast most of the deciding votes in life. There have been few palaces or parliaments in which a woman has not controlled. Elijah guessed at finalities too quickly; for with the shifting of the scene we find him fleeing for his life, nor stopping until he sank beneath the juniper tree and prayed to die. It is indeed a moving picture. The man who yesterday stood forth fearless and

uncompromising—rebuking to the face a recreant and backslidden king, challenging an entire ecclesiastical establishment to combat, instituting a comparison which, had it shown to his disadvantage, would have cost him his life at his altar, as righteously defiant as if the whole heaven were committed to his protection —to-day sinks down beneath a juniper tree and begs God to take away his life. We need almost to look a second time to be sure that we see aright.

There is pathos in the breakdown of any soul, no matter how great its sin. Few can read the story of Napoleon's collapse without a sense of sadness. Goethe's despairing cry for more light is pitiful. Let Albert T. Patrick put aside his mask and confess his terror and you shall have countless tears shed over the newspapers that chronicle the fact. But when the breakdown is the sag of some clean, loving spirit the pitifulness is doubled. Not long ago I sat by the bedside of one of

God's aged saints. Her face was singularly radiant with "the beauty of holiness." Eighty years of Christian discipleship had left their precious mark. As some one says of such a countenance, "Her features wore the imprint of benignity." Friends testified that a cross word had rarely passed her lips. Yet as I sat by her bedside, wishing that more of our men and women were living the life which wears as its coronation a face like that, the old eyes clouded, a quiver trembled across her lips, and with an agony she whispered that God seemed so far away. Dear heart! not to realize that the thickening clouds were but mists of morning, heralding eternal day!

A character as knightly as Lincoln knew the bleakest kind of days. Cowper went down from his Parnassus to touch the very bottoms of despair. The biographer shows Samuel Johnson, at the zenith of his brilliant career, making pilgrimage to Utoxeter to stand penitently,

amid the pelting rain and stinging wind, on the spot where once in childhood he had disobeyed his father. The rarest spirits have sometimes been most storm-swept with disheartenment and chagrin. Even Paul referred to the possibility of his becoming a castaway, and wrote from his Roman dungeon of his more than willingness to die. Millions have followed the Son of Mary into Gethsemane, have watched His blood-drops stain the ground and heard His agonizing prayer; or have gone and stood before His cross to catch the bitterest cry that ever broke from human lips, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The deepest seas lie off the most commanding shores. No soul ever climbs so high but that a single step may plunge it into despair. Every man "according as he purposeth in his heart" must share the experience of the prophet who came down from Carmel to throw himself at the foot of a juniper tree and wish that the end were near.

But there are certain considerations to be named as throwing light upon the mood through which Elijah was passing. In the first place, he was suffering physical reaction. Elijah was not altogether reprehensible for his display of weakness under the juniper tree. He had been under tremendous nervous pressure. The cold types give a poor conception of his conflict with the prophets of Baal. Elijah had been wrought up to that state of tension in which men live years in minutes, and hair turns gray in a night. An auditor of Daniel Webster's famous speech declares that sparks actually flashed from Webster's eyes. We may measure thus the intensity of soul combustion. Such a mood must have been the prophet's on Mount Carmel.

We must remember, also, that when the long-promised rain began to fall Elijah ran all the way to Jezreel before Ahab's chariot. Flesh and blood cannot bear such strain indefinitely. Reaction is

bound to come, and the man who stood fearless before his foes will start and cringe at a woman's threat. For every dominion the spirit exercises over the body the body claims its return. The more prolonged the spiritual tension the more helpless the spiritual reaction which follows. All immortal effort is at bodily expense and, soon or late, the body takes toll of the inward man. Few of us realize the price that world leaders have paid for their prestige. The prince of humorists once said that while the world was laughing at his wit his own heart was breaking with despair. Millais used to turn aside from the most brilliant strokes of his brush to wish that all his canvases were buried in the sea. Napoleon went nearly wild with melancholy after his most famous battles. It was during a fit of unconquerable depression that Luther flung his now notorious ink-bottle at an imaginary devil.

"Blue Monday" is a conspicuous ex-

ample of this phenomenon. Most people have heard the phrase; most ministers are acquainted with the fact. If there is ever a time when the average pastor doubts his usefulness it is on the day after he has toiled the hardest to be a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." Were he to appraise himself on Monday morning he would probably ask the trustees to reduce his salary. There is a sort of spiritual fog which comes drifting in with the vapors of Sunday night. How many cross husbands sit down to dinner every evening! Cessation of toil often means accession of peevishness. Molehills are magnified into mountains when work is through for the day, and the man who has been blandness itself to customer and broker comes home to make his children afraid and his wife ashamed of him. I have no plea to make in behalf of crotchetiness and petulance. There is a species of domestic devilment that has no justification before God or man; but there is also a decent de-

pression which is merely the concomitant of physical reaction, and our women are entitled to suffer it without reproach. Most days are hard for them, and oftentimes their fussiness and causticity have root in a weary body or an anxious heart.

So, in realms more distinctively religious, the canker which eats out the joy of so many Christian lives is frequently caused by a mere physical depression. Dyspepsia will spoil more landscapes and blot out more stars than can any ordinary cataclysm of nature. A tired body may cause the veriest saint to doubt his "calling and election." The highest forms of spiritual ecstasy, the most heroic Christly toils, are followed by sure and swift reaction; and when the reaction comes all skies seem brass, all hopes turn ashen. Here, in part, I believe, is the explanation of Jesus's cry from the cross. He was worn beyond the limits of bodily endurance. Flesh broke down beneath the awful burdens of the spirit. And it is a testimony to

the perfect humanity of Jesus that, after the dreadful days and nights which led up to Calvary, His heart cried out for mercy.

But this is not the whole cause of Elijah's despondency. There was in his mood somewhat besides reaction. Elijah was dispirited because he was idle. He went swiftly from a life of intense activity to a period of inaction. Rightly or otherwise, he left off working. For the first time in months, perhaps, his hands were idle. Certain maggots breed only in stagnant waters, and the soul is, frequently, most preyed upon by the foul fiends of hell when life is inactive. The unhappiest man in the world is the man who does not need to work, or whose periods of ease are protracted. I recently heard a yacht captain complaining of the long idle months between seasons. Strikers are seldom violent at the beginning of a strike; it is out of their enforced inaction that riot and murder break. To the man who has nothing to do life is scarcely worth living.

Observation shows that there is more real happiness among the moderately poor than among the luxuriously rich. The man who has to toil eight hours a day at manual labor is commonly more contented than the millionaire drones of earth, and gets more solid comfort out of his coarser food stuffs and penny pipe than does the wealthy loafer from all his Delmonico dinners and high-priced Havana cigars. It was not by any means a curse pronounced upon the first inhabitant of earth that he must toil for bread. There is no other road to happiness, no surer cure for sorrow. We were built for work, and he whose circumstances release him from the necessity of toil must find work even if he has to make it. Dr. Greer says: "When a man is so situated in this world that he does not have to toil for bread he must all the harder toil for something else than bread; . . . only by the sweat of his brow, his brain, his intellect, can he escape the curse in life, and find the

blessing in it!" The most despondent folks are commonly the idlers. More hearts have been broken by idleness than by labor. Now and again a man gets so tired of breadwinning that he takes the coward's way of getting out of the world. But you can scarcely pick up the daily paper except to find the chronicle of some poor soul who, without work or the prospect of it, took a leap in the dark. I recall a college mate who matriculated, not to fit himself for anything in particular, but to pass four superfluous years. He had more time and money than he knew how to spend. How we envied him his prospects, we thoughtless college lads—nothing to do but to read, travel, and grow old! He had no bread to earn, no pinching denials to make. The ways divided at graduation, and the next thing I heard about him was that he had grown so weary of having nothing to do that he had put a bullet through his brain to end the *ennui*.

Often I have heard a sufferer exclaim that he did not know how he could have lived at all but for the blessed necessity of work. It may seem a cold sort of comfort to offer to breaking hearts that they will be soonest mended by toil. Yet such is the patent fact. It was Cicero's solace that he could turn to philosophy and letters, after his idolized Tullia's death. Washington Irving might have died of the sorrow that crushed his heart had he not filled his days with labor. I am sure that Lincoln was saved from seasons of despair by the very burdens of the Civil War. Not long ago I stood with a man at the bedside of his dying wife, and I heard him whisper, "How can I ever go back to the office when she is gone?" There was nothing for me to say just then. Words are often impious and cruel at such an hour. Yet I knew that the day would come in which he would thank God for an office to which to flee, in whose multitudinous cares he might immure himself

and forget his loneliness for a few brief hours. Thank God for work! The thing that might have saved Elijah from the folly of his despair was work; more work.

But certain other elements contributed to Elijah's disheartenment. One of them is this: he had stood too long alone. A man can no more live without sympathy than a flower can thrive without light. There is no record that a single other—save perhaps his servant—had shared the prophet's abundant labors. Alone he had braved the monarch in his court and foretold approaching disaster; alone he had gone up into the loft with the widow's only son, to agonize there for the life of the child; alone he had gone forth to meet the issue on Carmel; alone he lay under the juniper tree—and under the spell of that loneliness he prayed to die. Small wonder that he was discouraged. His mission had left him too much alone.

It is one of the penalties of leadership

that often a man must stand alone. Some of the saddest words I have ever read were the confessions of earth's great leaders concerning their loneliness and exile. There was a period in the history of temperance reform in Maine when Neal Dow seemed to stand undefended and unloved. Garrison's famous words give only scant hint of the agony of baiting slavery alone. George Howard found little sympathy for his reform until he practically sold himself into the serfdom he would relieve. Oliver Cromwell realized that he held his position by the sheer force of his indomitable will. Imagine the unutterable loneliness of a rare soul like Huss as he was led to his terrible doom. I have never been amazed at Savonarola's display of weakness toward the closing of the chapter; was it not the solitariness of his own great devotion that helped to break him down?

I suppose that Jesus's life was the loneliest life ever lived. So far was He above

His contemporaries in perception of the truth, so quite beyond His disciples in His motive, so much removed from the earthly ambitions of His most blessed mother, that He must needs live His life alone. How often He turned from the rough fellowship and imperfect sympathy of John and Peter as from an unflowing spring! Only God could read His heart. Such, in his measure, must be the experience of every pioneer. The trees he must blaze lie away from the crowd. The soul that would lead mankind must be content to be often lonely.

So, also, with personal excellence and virtue. We must not count upon too much sympathy with our chastity or benefaction.

> "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
> Thou shalt not escape calumny."

Not only so, but it often seems as if the whitest souls had the foulest mud thrown on them. The heroine of *The Master Christian* was stabbed nearly to death for

the surpassing beauty of her canvas. All beauty, whether of form or spirit, is a target. Emerson says that "society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members." Let a man adopt a high standard for his life and he will soon discover how many human hounds there are. I have known an employee to be discharged solely because he would not lower his ideal to the sordid levels of his employer's practicality. A certain prominent merchant in New York used to announce on his walls that he wanted no Christian clerks around his store. The centuries have seen every form of persecution "for righteousness' sake." Jesus "trod the wine-press alone" because He was pure and true. Virtue need expect no flowery beds of ease to grow in. We may doubtless be most bitterly assailed for that particular grace which best commends us to God. Every clean soul must be prepared to stand alone.

Which brings me to speak of a final characteristic of Elijah's despondency. It is akin to the element we have just been considering. He fancied that he was the only representative of righteousness remaining upon earth. "I, even I, only, am left," was his lament. Either he did not know of or he had forgotten the existence of the other seven thousand. He could call to mind no loyal souls. No wonder he wanted to die. Yet there were seven thousand who had not yet bowed the knee to Baal. If there be a conspiracy of wickedness there is also a confederacy of goodness. When Elisha's servant was about to perish of fright Elisha prayed that the young man's eyes might be opened, "and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." No soul really struggles alone. Heaven and earth are thick with spiritual helpers. Every good man is confederate with every other. One day a famous astronomer announced his great

discovery. For months he had been working toward it, supposedly alone. What was his amazement to find that another had made the discovery at almost the selfsame hour and had also given it to the world. They had in reality been working together. Hundreds of miles apart, neither knowing of the anxiety of the other, they had been moving toward the same achievement—and in a world whose fundamental law is sympathy who can say how much one helped the other? Somewhere I have read of an eminent reformer who spent his life in self-imposed toil and, dying, found that an unknown coadjutor had been working with him all the time. John Brown died alone, but Beecher and Phillips and Lincoln were left. Our struggle is not really unaided. We are helped by unseen hands; and oftentimes some Blücher will come visibly on the scene just in time to turn our Waterloo into a victory. And always over all is God, "a very present help."

How unreasonable, then, after all, was Elijah's despondency! In spite of all its apparent warrants it was unwarranted. He had no adequate justification for that cry under the juniper tree. But notice how God dealt with him: first He let Elijah fall asleep; then He gave him food by angel ministrants; then He took him a long way off from the scene of his discontent; then He hid him in a cave, and finally He spoke to him in the "still small voice," naming the seven thousand faithful folk who had not bowed the knee to Baal. What a cure for disheartenment—sleep, food, new scenes, new voices, then a vision! It was enough. Elijah never faltered again.

II

A DISCIPLE WHO BLEW HOT AND COLD

Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee. But he denied before them all.—Matthew xxvi, 69, 70.

A DISCIPLE WHO BLEW HOT AND COLD

PETER is, probably, the best loved man of the apostolic company. Less beautiful of soul than the beloved disciple, less constant in devotion than the heroic Paul, he is yet nearer than either to the heart of the Christian world. With all his obvious faults admitted he is a sort of patron saint to ordinary mortals. It might be difficult, perhaps, to name the reason. Surely no one of the apostles disappoints and chagrins us so keenly as does he. His best moods were constantly breaking off into presumption or cowardice. If at one moment he gladdens us by some loving act, some rich avowal, he is pretty sure, at the next moment, to make us ashamed of him. According to the record, he committed more blunders than all the rest of the disciples put together. Peter it was who, descrying his Master through the storm, asked to be permitted to walk out

across the waves to meet Him; but, the fervid impulse past, feeling the yielding water beneath his feet he began to cry and to sink ingloriously. It was Peter who had the hardihood to rebuke his Master for setting His gracious face toward a Cross. It was Peter who, at the marvelous moment of the Transfiguration, wanted to turn carpenter and erect three tabernacles upon the Mount. And when, a few weeks later, Jesus rose from supper to gird Himself as a common servant and to wash His disciples' feet, Peter it was who drew up his feet, declaring, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." It was Peter who tried to find out the name of the betrayer; Peter who attested his vaunted courage by hacking off a servant's ear; Peter who objected to the Lord's appointment of his destiny.

But it is with none of these displays of weakness that we are concerned just now; rather with the crowning ignominy of Peter's denial. It needs but few words to

make the ancient story vivid. It is part of that consummate tragedy which has been photographed upon more human hearts than has any other event in history. What a night that was before the crucifixion! It might seem as if every detail had been diabolically arranged to intensify the agony of Jesus. Difficult it would be to name one redeeming feature in earth's conduct toward the Son of God as His ministry drew to its close. The drama of Immortal Love has a background of almost unrelieved gloom. Socrates had at least the comradeship of a few loyal friends as he raised the hemlock; Latimer and Ridley cheered and comforted each other as the flames crept up their bodies; Gordon died with his servants fighting for him, but Jesus could not lean upon the loyalty even of the man who had promised most. It was not enough that the chosen few should fail to understand; not enough that the three intimates of Jesus had slept through His

agony in the Garden; not enough that a member of the Twelve had betrayed Him. It was not even enough that throughout the long night hours He should stand absolutely undefended and alone—not a friendly voice to speak one strong or tender word, not a friendly cheek to crimson when the rabble spit in His face. All this, with what of agony was yet to follow, was not enough, but at the climax of it all Peter must deny his Lord. Oh crisis of all ingratitude and meanness—that at a season in which friendship had its most holy opportunity, and a single protesting word might have made the utterer's name immortal, the very man who had breathed the warmest vows should deny his Friend Divine! Such is the inglorious record of Peter's cowardice.

But I must speak two kindly words just here. It has been generally assumed that Peter was specially reprehensible because, having said so much about alle-

giance, he fell away. And perhaps it is a degree worse to promise and not to perform than not to promise at all. Such, at any rate, is an accepted creed. I know men who feel abundantly excused for certain riotousness of conduct because they do not belong to any Church. It is a stock argument for doing as he pleases that the transgressor has never pretended to do anything else. A thousand times I have heard the Church condemned for the failure of its members to measure up to their professions, whereas the very same derelictions are condoned in those who do not happen to have professed. Unchurched sons of God are evidently expecting to get to Heaven on the scant merit of not having tried—as if there were more virtue in living up to a lowlying creed than in failing to live up to a high one; as if the commandments of the Lord were binding only upon certain sects of humankind; as if a ragged soul outside the Church were more respect-

able than a ragged soul inside! As if, in other words, dishonesty, unchastity, and falsehood were one thing for the worldling and quite another for the Christian.

I am tired of such nonsense. I hold that the moral law binds everywhere and always, irrespective of man's acceptance or profession of living by it. I hold that the need of a clean heart is universal. I hold that there is no disability laid upon the Church member which is not also laid upon the entire community. When a man joins the Church he merely admits the necessity of living righteously. He does not create the necessity, it was existent before he recognized it. Whatever is proper for a son of God outside the fellowship of Christians is proper for a son of God inside that fellowship; and whatever is disgraceful for a man who occupies a pew on the Lord's Day or teaches a Sunday school class is also disgraceful for the citizen who never crosses the threshold of a church. Byron laid down the prin-

ciple that certain free spirits like his own must not be judged by ordinary codes. Because he was a genius he considered himself exempt from sundry moral prohibitions as to conduct. He might indulge in intemperate cups and adulterous connections because he was a genius; he might have added, "because he did not profess to be a Christian." Nero outside the Church was no more tolerable than a Nero in the Church. Calvin's cruelty was not more or less unkind than the cruelty of any other inquisitor possessing the same degree of light. The essence of Peter's infamy lay not in the fact that he broke a vow, but in this—that after three years' intercourse with Jesus he could be so unspeakable a coward as to deny his Lord. There was additional sting, doubtless, in the memory of his promise to be true, but the sorrow which broke his heart was that, promise or no promise, by every just and holy consideration he ought to have been true.

But there is another alleviative word which ought to be spoken in passing. It is frequently assumed that Peter was a conscious hypocrite. I do not believe it. On the contrary, I believe he was just as sincere when he pledged his loyalty to Jesus as when in after years, according to the legend, he sealed his loyalty upon an inverted cross. The flame that blazed up in his heart as he looked into Jesus's eyes was as pure a flame as ever illumined a martyr's pathway. At the moment when he promised he was indeed ready to die. Had the test been then required he would have met it like a man. It was in later moments, when the first glow of his devotion had cooled, that he committed the sin forever associated with his name.

Conscious hypocrites are few. Most men mean well; mean what they say at the time. They simply cannot bear the strain of great temptation. A certain churchman was so notoriously unworthy

that most of the afflictions of the church were charged up to his account. If a revival failed to come it was because this particular man was still permitted to be a member. I had scarcely become familiar with his name before I was apprised of his infirmities. They told me how he would sit with the saints on the Lord's Day and cheat like a pirate all the remainder of the week. I heard the whole sad story of the chasm between his prayers and his practices. I confess that I was thoroughly prejudiced against him. And when I saw him in a nearby pew on Sunday, and listened to his humble prayer on Wednesday evening, I said in my heart, "Thou hypocrite!" I do not say it now. For years I studied the man, with the result that I believe him no more deserving to be called a hypocrite than are the best of us. Weak and pitifully unworthy he is, but not a conscious hypocrite. When he sat under the preaching of the Gospel I believe he meant to be the kind of man

the preacher was trying to describe. When he led the people in a prayer of reverent thankfulness and deep contrition he meant every word he uttered. But when he got back into the world of business, and temptation assailed him afresh, he became again the man he never intended to be.

Only God knows the honest efforts of those who fail. If men and women achieved what in their best moments they intend, we should have a generation of saints. In a downtown mission lay the lifeless body of a city Magdalen. Around the rude bier knelt her friends, the scarlet women of the streets. The burial service was over and the women had broken spontaneously into the singing of a hymn. How they sang!—those wretched, abandoned souls! What tears were in their eyes! The song was full of sobs. After a moment more they quietly arose and, with reverence and solemnity in every movement, passed from the Mission Hall.

Back to their lives of sin? Yes, probably. But not as hypocrites. They were true women while they sang that hymn. I believe that they were strangely conscious of every throb of its power. And they sinned again chiefly because they did not know how to carry back into a carnal world the impulse which had ennobled them for the moment.

But this brings us naturally back to Peter's blunder. He failed because he mistook strength of feeling for strength of manhood. His was an æolian nature: it responded promptly to every breath of passing influence. No other of the disciples loved so passionately as he; no other made the same holy offer to die with the Master. But Peter lived too much by feeling. Hence he was as likely to be caught in the ebb tide as in the flood. Could we be always sure of heavenly trade winds we might hope to sail into the heavenly harbor without an agony. But gusts of passion are inadequate motive-

power for souls. It is perfectly possible for people to respond warmly to noble appeals without being essentially or consistently noble themselves. That a man gives charitable dollars does not by any means prove him to be a charitable man. A deal of philanthropic work is done by folks who have small real sympathy with poverty and pain. Let such people be present in the congregation when some special appeal is presented, and they may subscribe a generous amount; let them be brought face to face with actual want, and you may start their tears and purse-strings; but it is no serious part of their life to feed the hungry and minister to weakness. And when a man gets less real joy out of the payment of his subscription than he did out of its making, a few weeks earlier, he discredits the quality of his philanthropy. It requires only a gush of benevolent feeling to toss out a few silver dimes or to send a turkey at Thanksgiving time; but to systematically

tithe one's income for God's poor, to follow dollars with prayers and devotion, to be as willing to bear with the sinner as to give him a coat or a meal—this requires principle.

The world is full of failures that had magnificent beginnings. It is the customary thing for a new clerk to do well for the first few days. Graduation Day is a day of beautiful impulses and glorious resolutions. There are countless Mozarts and Rubensteins in embryo who practice scales with fury for a term or two. If Websters were built by impulse the world would be crowded with them. But it is the clerk who works harder the second week than he did the first, and so on through the years, that becomes a Wanamaker. Only the graduate who turns his vision into sinew finds the world his friend. Only those musicians and orators who submit to the tyranny of rule and routine may hope to charm men's ears. Limoges pottery was once plastic

and mobile clay, but being fashioned into a beautiful form it hardened into a vase. Character is simply the solidifying of fine emotion.

It is sometimes asked how so many "poor sticks" ever got into the church. They were not poor sticks when they came in. Most of them entered with pure emotions and lofty aspirations. There is an irresistible charm in the chaste self-renouncing life. Nobody can help wishing, at times, to be like Saint Paul or Saint Cecilia. And when Jesus Christ is preached in His beauty music starts up in every heart. I do not believe that the average worldling can sit through a helpful service without experiencing all manner of noble aspirations. Whether he will be improved a week later will be determined by the percentage of religious feeling which solidifies into manhood. It takes more than a holy mood to yield holy character. Aaron Burr was once in deep contrition for his sins, but he took a

friend's advice and dropped the matter. Hugh Pentecost started as well as his more enviable brother, yet his devotion cooled off into hideous shapes of infidelity. Dr. Herron began his ministry in power, and closed it in disgrace simply because he was unable to carry over into the struggles of succeeding years his early conviction. To tune one's life by its highest note is the paramount duty of man. Peter was in danger because, and in so far as, he allowed impulse to govern him; but when pain and discipline had wrought their beautiful work upon him, and passion had hardened down into strength, he became the sort of rock on which Christ ever builds His Church.

Another thing I observe about Peter's blunder. He put undue strain upon his loyalty. He expected too much of himself. There is a sense, I suppose, in which it is true that no man can build his confidence too high, but it is also true that well-meaning people often impose upon

their own good intentions. Peter did very well so long as he kept near his Master, but the moment he allowed himself to follow "afar off" he increased his peril perceptibly, and when he took his place with the sneering folk just outside Caiaphas's palace he made certain of shipwreck and loss.

I have often noticed upon the side of English vessels near the water-line a peculiar cross mark. Plimsoll's mark, they call it, for its inventor. It indicates the load-line of safety. No English vessel dares to sail out of harbor with that mark submerged. How many ships might have been saved by such caution! On the bottoms of all seas are the rotting hulls of countless craft that have been sunk by overloading. Would to God there were a Plimsoll's mark for human life. Each soul has its individual buoyancy. It will float under a definite pressure of events, but load on too much and it adds another to the world's tragedies.

The comparatively recent accident to the Brooklyn Bridge is another instance of overloading. Years ago Colonel Roebling predicted just such results from careless management. Magnificent as is the structure in its entirety, and just in all its details, it has a maximum of strength. One truck or car too many is a menace to public safety. It is said that the harrowing disaster to the yacht *Venitzia* might easily have been averted. But the captain preferred to carry sail. He took the chance, and sent his craft to the bottom with half a dozen lives.

Bravado is not bravery. It is a man's business to know the limitations of his own strength, and to keep within them. I have an acquaintance who, the next day after he had sworn off the use of liquor, went to his wine-closet to prove his virtue. Every day he would take out the whisky bottle, uncork it, and hold it to his nose just to let himself know that he was master. In his case the experiment

worked admirably, but with most men it would have been likely to prove disastrous. He evidently knew himself strong, while for the ordinary tippler to adopt that method would prove conclusively the opposite. Each soul has a weak spot—it may be pride, conviviality, unchastity, love of money, or anything else—but, whichever it is, the weak spot exists, and must invariably be taken into account. When a man deliberately exposes his personal frailty to assault he proves his folly. How many young men walk again along the edge of the precipice from which they fell! How many souls sail into the same reefs again and again! How many of God's children come in day after day, soiled by the selfsame pitch!

Even after Peter had denied his Master once he failed to move away from a dangerous locality. It would seem that he might have realized the unwholesomeness of conditions for a man of his weakness. He merely shuffled from the court to the

porch. It was, perhaps, in part, the tug of his own abused loyalty that chained him. But he might have known that a palace within whose precincts he had once denied his Lord was a perilous place for him. He tarried, however, until he had committed the offense three times.

One other suggestion of this familiar story we may notice. Peter's weakness was, in essence, selfishness. Call it falsehood, or cowardice, or anything else you please, it amounts to, or resolves itself into, the same thing: selfishness. Peter had never learned to live for anyone except himself. He followed Jesus, not for the sake of what he could do, but for the sake of what he could get. As a consequence, when danger threatened, his chief concern was for himself. When his faith was challenged he thought first of his own skin. Outrage to loyalty and honor seemed, for the moment, less terrible than embarrassment and possible peril to himself. His anxiety was to come out of the

present predicament unscathed. Deep loyalty is impossible so long as a man is living for himself. Friendship means little in such an atmosphere. Religion chokes while its professor is "taking care of number one." It is quite as important, indeed, that we should live for God as that God should live for us. Unselfishness is the root from which the best graces grow. A man must cultivate that if he would avoid the shame which overwhelmed Peter.

In a closing word I want to remind you what brought Peter to himself. According to St. Luke, it was a look from Jesus. Peter did not even notice the cockcrowing until after he caught sight of Jesus's face. Then he remembered—as we sometimes recall a significant circumstance which made no registry in passing. Peter could have borne almost anything better than the silent, sorrowful look in the eyes of his Master. You may have seen such look on a mother's face. Worse than any

bodily torment is that look of outraged love. St. John says that the aspect which will make men call upon the rocks and mountains to come and cover them will be "the wrath of the Lamb," the wrath of Love. Somewhat of that look swept Peter's heart. He did the noblest thing possible when he went out and wept bitterly. He was never so much a man as when he broke down in sorrow for his sin. The finest proof of manhood that some of us could give would be to quail before God's glance and stand ashamed.

III

THE FREEDOM OF THE FULL-GROWN

To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.—Revelation ii, 7.

THE FREEDOM OF THE FULL-GROWN

It was the opinion of the famous "Father Taylor" that "folks are better than angels." They were at least more interesting to him, as their needs were more apparent. He had, probably, no very valid or satisfactory conception of the glorified beings of which the Bible speaks, nor was it clear that his ministry on earth could to any great degree affect them. But he knew a host of folks in Boston and around it who needed just the sort of help he felt qualified to give. He saw a throng of opportunities for the earthly investment of every benevolent dollar. He felt that he had a message for bewildered earth-pilgrims. So he gave his life, not to "angels," but to "folks."

And, wittingly or otherwise, he struck the note of a new age in faith and service. Men have a diminishing interest in angels and an increasing interest in folks. The paramount discovery of the present age is

the discovery of man. Columbus discovered America some four hundred years before man really discovered himself. Most of the famous "finds" in art and science preceded the discovery of man. Indeed he may scarcely be said to be discovered yet, but the tide is moving that way; and some day nature will be studied, not as a gallery of curios, but as the potential ally of man. Some day the only real science will be that science which enriches human life. Some day the test of a book will be as to its possession of a message for hearts. Some day theology will be judged, not according to its revelations of life to come, but by its visions of the life which we now live in the flesh. So, inevitably, with any such book as the Apocalypse. There was a day when men fed their hearts on glimpses of golden streets and beatified harpers. Countless saints have "fallen asleep" in the rapture of such visions. Folks who could hardly tell the bass from the treble clef, to whom "Auld

lang syne" and the long-meter Doxology were one and the same, have piously sighed for the day of golden harps and heavenly hosannas. The pulpit was deemed most effective when the preacher discoursed on themes entirely beyond his ken. To-day men care less about seas of glass and walls of crystal. They are not at all sure that the Revelator ever spent a single hour in heaven. They very much doubt the validity of his celestial information. Unless John has somewhat to offer to human life his message is effete. Because, though we have been a long time finding it out, he has just that—because he deals with human life upon the shores of time, because he speaks a stirring word for existing mundane affairs—his book is gloriously modern.

Take as an example this word to the Ephesian Church: "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." An unprohibited tree—does

that refer to heaven? Commentators have thus generally interpreted the passage. They have thought to catch here a glimpse of the second Eden, beyond the sepulcher. But I do not so understand it. John was not dreaming of heaven at all; he was dreaming of man at his best. I think it is quite evident what image was in his mind. He was thinking of the famous tree of Eden hedged about with all manner of ringing prohibitions, forbidden to the dwellers in that first garden: the tree which had played so tragic a part in the history of man. It, too, had stood in the midst of a paradise of God. Its fruit had hung temptingly within human reach. And John remembered how, for the partaking of that fruit, the partakers had been driven from their Eden. What a tragedy it was—staining all the subsequent centuries with blood, reproducing itself in every age—the "tragedy of the forbidden fruit!" John wondered if that was the best that human life could offer

or achieve: a tree in the midst of a garden, and banishment as the penalty for touching it. Then the veil parted and John had another vision. This time also a tree in the midst of a garden, but with no encompassing prohibition, no flaming sword. Of the fruit of that tree every conquering spirit might eat. It was not heaven; it was the perfecting of earth. The first Eden was a story of human life. This second Eden, as John prefigured it, was also a story of human life, but of life as God would have it, of life in the full liberty of sons of God. And here was the beautiful distinction, as it appeared to John. The genius of the first Eden had been prohibition; the genius of the second Eden was to be emancipation. History began with a law of commandments, it was to end with a law of life. Man was first a servant, he was ultimately to become the greatest of masters—the master of himself. Such was John's vision of the civilization which is to be.

But why, according to this philosophy, was one tree forbidden to Adam and Eve? Not because the tree was evil, but because they were immature. Meat is good, but it is not therefore included in a baby's dietary. Various "good things" of life are denied to childhood. Young life is punctuated with a series of prohibitions. The child can hardly move hand or foot without encountering a deterring "don't." I sometimes wonder that he grows up with any good nature left, he is subjected to such a running fire of protests. And yet that is the only way he is likely to grow up at all. Let him alone, let him make laws for himself, let him find out for himself that gravitation works, and you have simply denied him the opportunity of growing to be a man. Commandments are concessions to his immaturity and weakness. If he lives he will outlive the necessity of many of these commandments. They will have served their purpose. He will have come to the age of

strong meat—and drink, perhaps. But just now the commandment which lays embargo upon his freedom is his surest hope for the future. Some day he may attain to the freedom of the tree of life.

I have heard a lad ask his mother, in a tone of solemn finality, "Is there anything I *can* do?" He had obviously been running against the law of the household, the domestic decalogue. He was tired and sore with straining at the halter, and I know by personal experience that in such a mood the outlook for a lad is very dark. It seems as if the last privilege were gone and life itself a serfdom. But it is by no means so. There are a dozen privileges to every deprivation. The Garden of Eden, according to the story, was full of trees, all but one of them unrestricted, but the time came when, under the spell of great temptation, they all seemed to have vanished save the one whose fruit had been forbidden. Strange how desire will so blind a soul that it can see only the thing

affirmations to the contrary. In an ideal civilization, as in certain exigencies of the present régime, wine has its worthy uses. There is just one valid reason for abstention from its use, and that reason is found in the present frailty of human nature. The fruit of this particular tree is denied to men because men are still immature and undeveloped. And thus in a multitude of ways we are hedged about with galling limitations, restrained in the use of our freedom, compelled to pass under the yoke of various commandments, simply because we have not yet attained to the perfecting of manhood and womanhood.

Here, then, is the key to the attitude of the Church on certain mooted questions. Take its attitude toward wealth. From the day on which Jesus bade the rich man sell all that he had and give to the poor the Church has had a sidelong look at riches. There have been ages in which the possession of riches was deemed a crime sufficient to exclude from the kingdom of

grace and glory, and even to this day we try to extract a sort of grim comfort from the poverty which keeps us humble. There are men who, if they are not really contented to be poor, would at least be almost afraid to be rich. Jesus declared it easier for a camel to pass through a certain gate than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Yet the reason is not to be found in any intrinsic unholiness of wealth. On the contrary, wealth is one of God's precious gifts. It is one of the noblest trees in the midst of the garden. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations. Its rich fruit is for mankind, but there is a fence of a warning about it still —God's concession to and provision against our weakness.

The early devotees of Christianity affected to despise art. A statue of Praxiteles was offensive to them. They regarded beauty as sown with seeds of poison. Deliberately and conscientiously they set themselves against the æsthetic in

life and custom as against the heathen and profane. Their conventicles were of the plainest. Whatever appealed to the senses in curve or color they vehemently eschewed. It was in pursuance of this spirit that they razed magnificent temples which modern students would give fortunes to reproduce. Thus also in the middle ages they broke out into a furious onslaught against the images of the saints. In the same mood a man said to me recently, "Don't ask me to come to your church. You think more of carpets and church finery than you do of the worship of God." It was a savage thing to say, and the man who expressed the sentiment was hardly qualified to utter it. Nevertheless there was an element of truth in what he said. There is an inveterate tendency toward idolatry of forms and symbols. Worship of beauty has always contended with the worship of God. It is only too evident that the vision of the eyes has often cost men the vision of the heart,

Just as protracted gazing upon some glaring color unfits the eye to discern the nicer shades, so outward splendor may dull the heart for spiritual discernment. This has been the curse of Romanism. It is one of the perils of the modern High Church movement. It may also be our undoing. Beauty belongs to men. The eye was made for it. It is the most brilliant tree in the garden. Still we may not eat freely of its fruit because we are not yet full-grown.

Or, consider the Christian doctrine of pleasure. To greater or less degree the Church has always aligned her guns against the so-called "pleasures of the world," denying them, of course, to members of her communion, and fulminating terribly against their toleration in any life. One of the first things that attracted attention to the early Christians was their conspicuous absence from the circus and the theater. Many went so far as even to deny themselves the legitimate and divinely intended relationships of life.

Whatever warmed the cockles of the heart they counted sin. They exalted celibacy as a topmost virtue. They founded all manner of retreats and monasteries. They tried to beat out, by fasts and macerations, the last spark of human desire. In this day we have amusement rules and sundry prohibitions all of which mean the same thing. They all bear witness to the same outstanding fact, discerned by thoughtful souls in all ages, that the human heart easily grows riotous and wanton. But pleasure is not sin. The love of pleasure is as natural as the love of life. In a perfect world there would be no restrictions needed. The tree which John saw in the midst of the garden was not forbidden. We are restricted now simply because we cannot be trusted to choose the pure and good.

Now, then, we may be better prepared to understand this particular Scripture, and to correct thereby mischievous error. There is general agreement that the

church member, *because he is a Christian,* should refrain from doing certain debatable things. The real reason for such abstention is quite the opposite. Not because we *are* religious, but because we are *not* religious, are we hedged about with various restraints. For example, I hear it is said that no *good* Christian ought to go to the theater, whereas the fact is that the good Christian is the only Christian who may safely go at all. The reason for staying away must be sought not in one's piety, but in the want of it. Hence the fault I find with the present status of the question is that the wrong sort of people, in general, attend the theater. Those who could most safely go seem to care least about going, while those who cannot morally afford to go are most prone to lend their presence. It is not Christianity that lays the embargo. "To the pure all things are pure." It is the want of vital Christian life that ties our hands.

I am often asked if a Christian ought to dance. There is only one answer. A Christian is the only person fit to dance. If thoughts were all pure and hearts were all sound, if our bodies were not forever taking occasion to sin against our spirits, there would be, there could be, no harm in dancing. Because human nature is so pitifully weak that it cannot bear the peculiar seductions which the modern dance affords we are warned against it. Of course a Christian may dance; he is free to do it in proportion to his maturity as a Christian. But when real Christians do the dancing the dance will lose certain of its present characteristics.

It is sometimes asked how much riches a Christian may be permitted to amass. The answer is perfectly simple. He can afford to have as much riches as he has religion. Money never yet hurt a truly regenerate heart. I know people who could be, I believe, better Christians on fifty thousand dollars a year than they can

on the present five thousand. Tolstoi is not the final prophet of the coming age. He has gotten only so far as the asceticism of religion. There is a stage beyond that. The Gospel of Jesus does not end with denial. It ends with liberty. The tree in the first garden was denied man. But John had another vision. He saw a tree in the second garden, and its branches were open to every soul that had attained to Christian mastery of itself. Not sanctified poverty but sanctified wealth is the logic of Christian truth. So with regard to the other embargoes laid by Christianity upon present freedom. Not because we are pure, but because we are not pure, are we enjoined to withhold our eyes from certain forms of art. Not as tribute to strength but as concession to weakness are we bidden to abjure the wineglass. "All things are yours," declared Saint Paul. And so they are when we become fitted to appreciate and use them.

Here is the "sweet reasonableness" of

Lent. "A rag of heathenism," a prominent dissenter calls it. But that is simply because he does not understand its deep philosophy. The real purpose of Lent is not a mortified but a sanctified life. Communicants are asked to abstain from meat on certain days that they may the better use it on other days. For a few weeks certain pleasures are interdicted—not because they are wrong but in order that a quickened conscience may use them more wisely in the future. Lent is no more truly a type of the Christian year than was the wilderness the goal of Israel. The wilderness prepared the Israelites for Canaan. So Lent ought to prepare the thoughtful Christian for the richer enjoyment of the rest of the year. The fruit is denied for a season that, afterward, we may take it into more reverent hands.

What an ideal of life that was to which John looked—salvation not by restriction, but by inward qualifying: "To him that overcometh." John conceived that in pro-

portion as men grow Christian the prohibitory bars will be let down: that a thoroughly Christianized world will be absolutely free. The problem is to help men to "overcome." According to the Arabs, the palm tree stands with its feet in salt water and its head in the sun. You cannot drink the water about the roots; but the tree has an alchemy of its own, and if you tap the trunk you will find the brackish water transformed into palm wine.

A recent discovery, accidentally made, opens an alluring field of speculation and experiment. Two mice had been unintentionally left in a glass tube for several days, and upon release were found to be apparently unharmed by the confinement. There was no way of accounting for their survival except by the presence in the tube of a small quantity of sodium bioxide. Taking the phenomenon as a hint, experiments were made with other animals; later, in the diving bells of sub-

marine workers. In every case the test worked perfectly, and to-day scientific men are talking of adapting the phenomenon to the ventilation of mines and buildings. It is a new thought for the material world. But it is as old as Christianity in the realm of spirit. What was it but this for which Jesus prayed as He looked into the disciples' faces? "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Safety—not by outward protection (they were to go everywhere and meet everything), but safety by inward immunity—this was Jesus's ideal for them. With their hearts "kept" there would be no need to fence off the tree. Toward such a civilization are we working, in spite of many halts and pauses. In many respects mankind is still under the law of the first Eden, but when Jesus's prayer is perfectly answered the second Eden will have come.

IV

THE PERILS OF PRIVILEGE

And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman. . . . And David sent messengers, and took her.—2 Samuel xi, 2, 4.

It is no wonder that David's harp was so variously toned. He touched more of the notes of human life than did any other man of sacred history. A poet's song can never surpass in range the registry of his own heart. He must learn in suffering what he would teach in song. According to which prescription, David was marvelously qualified to sing. There is hardly a human experience with which he was unfamiliar, hardly a cup of nectar or gall but he had drained. He began life amid the "pastoral solitudes of Bethlehem," and ended it in the royal palace of the realm. His hand was equally at home on the shepherd's crook and the kingly scepter. He was master of both harp and sword. He was anointed king while still a lad, and then waited a weary term to receive his kingdom. He came like a sunbeam across the melancholy mood of Saul, and went out of the royal presence

to be hunted like a common thief. He knew friendship in all its sweetness and envy in its most fertile forms. He heard the people's thunderous applause when it concerned himself, and again when it saluted his conspiring son. He looked up into the heavens at the full noon of conscious power, and he knew the bleakness of watching every star "grow dim and disappear." Peasant and poet, court favorite, and captain, lover and lord—David was all these and more. As Maclaren says of him: "None of the great men of Scripture passed through so many changes; none . . . touched life at so many points; none . . . were so tempered and polished by swift alternation of heat and cold, by such heavy blows and the friction of such rapid revolutions."

But it is with a single aspect of David's career that we are just now interested. Everybody knows the story. Critics would not have suffered us to forget it, even if otherwise we could have done so.

It is the old heartbreaking story that has stained so many life-histories with blood and tears. Only, here it is written without garniture and glamour. Not a word to feed a prurient imagination, not an unnecessary touch; just the plain, straightforward record of an unholy love. "More would have been less;" less would have been more. Would that modern novels were half as clean and true! There came a time when David forgot his kingliness. He loved a woman guiltily. And in the spell of a first defiling look he staked his crown for a woman's caress. In the White Mountains is a famous bowlder upon which countless travelers have gazed. Years ago it came down from the heights with deafening roar, tearing its ugly path through glen and grove, gouging the hillsides as it pitilessly fell, until it lay, at length, where travelers view it to-day, across the mountain road, a fallen monolith. So David fell. No hand seemed strong enough to steady him, no

yawning gulf sufficiently appalled; for one day, amid the gusts and lurid lights of sensuality, he lost his hold on God, and crashing through all codes and sanctities came down into the common plain, a lump of fallen clay, the spectacle of ages. A peerless man undone, a matchless singer palsied, a soul unsettled from its regal place—such is the picture.

But the tragedy was not all of a single day. There must have been, according to the simile, a gradual loosening of hold. No cliff breaks down all at once. Manhood does not fall in a single storm. It takes a long process of disintegration, an unsuspected cleavage from the right, a gradual weakening of moral tone, before a good man is ready for the crash which fills a world with horror. People could hardly believe that John C. Eno was really a defaulter. We are scarcely ever prepared for such a rough awakening as that. We somehow believe that wholesome manhood ought to bear the shock of

a single great temptation. But it is not the single shock, it is the insidious decay which accounts for the tragedy. No cable breaks all at once. First there must be a quiet fraying of the strands, a weakening of the fibers: then some day when the strain is on, and lives dependent, the cable parts and the world writes "tragedy." Students of such things say it is only a question of time when our water mains will burst—not necessarily by sudden pressure, but by the steady, unnoticed action of various electric currents which are constantly leaking from the wires. Electrolysis, they call it; the gradual perforation and decomposition of the iron. In much the same way a human organism breaks down. The body was built to withstand a thousand shocks and to repair all manner of waste. It is almost incredible how much a man can bear without apparent damage. Then, suddenly, a hearty meal or a fit of laughter brings on the end. Physicians say that such ca-

tastrophies have almost invariably a history of insidious decay. Some undermining process, some long indulgence, has been at work.

So, preeminently, of the spirit. Temptation has comparatively little power over a thoroughly healthy soul. No man succumbs to a special onset of evil until he has weakened himself by other sins. There is a history of hidden riot or secret folly behind every outbreaking sin. I notice that it was so with David. In the verse next preceding the chronicle of his fall it says that, while other kings were going forth to battle, David remained behind. That was not like the David of yore. He would hardly have won his spurs with such a temper. The David who went out against Goliath, and who later made himself the terror of all foes, was a totally different man. In those days the first trumpet-call found him in the thick of the fray. Now he had grown passive and self-indulgent. He

was quite willing to stay at home and let others do the fighting. He had lost the vision of himself as God's "right-hand man." And it was the David who could tarry at home while his soldiers were fighting for him, pampering himself while his brethren were enduring hardness, a man whose heart had lost its gristle—it was this inglorious David who fell a prey to the fatal beauty of a woman.

The crimes of the age are peculiarly the crimes of a self-indulgent spirit. Like certain fungi, they grow tallest in a superheated soil. Our newspapers do a vast deal of raving over the few "blue laws" which still remain on the statute books. Puritanism is the pet aversion of the metropolitan press. One might almost imagine that most of the ills to which our commonwealth is heir were the entail of Puritan lawmaking—and, to be fair, I suppose there was a certain juicelessness about the sterner days. But I could name a good many accessions to our age less

desirable than would be an increase of Puritanic spirit. The very austerity of the Puritans' daily life saved them from many an outbreaking offense to which we are tempted by our ease and comfort. Almost within sight of the spot where the Pilgrims landed is a famous resort whose social iniquities Colonel Watterson has made specially notorious. Jealousy where once bloomed fraternity and kindness, irreverence to take the place of Sabbath sanctity and calm, adultery instead of chastity—such is the record. What accounts for the difference? Largely, a difference of spirit. Defiling things commonly break out of idle lives. The devil trusts his choicest work to empty hearts and hands. An active David would hardly have soiled his life with the stains of adultery and murder. David the easy-going is a synonym for shame. We may well thank God for work to tax our nerves and engage our utmost strength. We ought to be glad for all toil which

draws away the mind from ignoble things; to rejoice in the task which shuts out a vision our eyes should never behold.

But this story of David contains several outstanding broad hints for every life. First, that no position is so exalted as to insure immunity from harm. I fancy that David looked forward to the day when he should sit upon a throne as to a day of moral enfranchisement and safety. Often during the perils of his youth, when the fire burned hotly in his veins and the world seemed choked with evil, he must have longed for the immunities of a crown. How firmly he would stand when at length he felt the palace pavement beneath his feet! Yet, as matter of fact, temptation never assailed him so furiously as after he had gained the throne. The higher he was exalted among men the more conspicuous target he seemed to offer. He made the most terrible missteps from the vantage ground of power. He might have gone down

from his palace roof to be a king in conduct had he not been king in fact. Such is the common experience of mankind. Martineau has a remarkable meditation on the "temptations of power." We sometimes talk as if men were carried above the grade of evil in measure as they are exalted above ordinary levels. Young folks long for the coming of Graduation Day that they may be released from present perils. Mothers fancy their boys would be more safe by advancement to better positions in business. Men sometimes tell me how good they will be after God shall have prospered their endeavors. But quite the contrary is what experience teaches. Every new territory bears its special seeds of temptation. Evil, like the atmosphere, rarefies as we ascend. Hercules found that for every head of the dragon which he cut off a new head grew. Let a man leave behind him the besetments of poverty and he fronts the seductions of wealth. Let him become a scholar

and a new brood of perils will cross his path. Let him be a Christian and he may find a dozen enemies for every one outdistanced.

I remember some of the talks and dreams of a little group of college mates: one looked to a life of political preferment, another pictured himself as making a fortune in the markets of the world, a third was dedicating himself to teaching. The first won his office, the second his fortune, and the third his professorship. What especially interests me as concerning those old intimates is that success brought bitterness to each. They found their heartbreak just where they looked for gladness only, and as we met at a class reunion, recently, they were scarred by the very triumphs which had given them note among men.

One of the saddest pages kept by the Recording Angel is the record of souls which have been damned by their successes. Aaron Burr might have left a

fairer fame had he never entered the political arena; Shelley's great genius helped to lead him astray; if Ingersoll had been less an orator he might have been less a defamer; the greatest misfortune that ever came to Andrew Johnson was his elevation to the chief magistracy of our republic. Success is a weapon that often "kills at both ends." It is significant that Jesus's temptation occurred just after the heavens had opened and a voice had proclaimed His Sonship. We perhaps can scarcely guess all that the voice and vision meant to Jesus. They were the ample acknowledgment and accrediting of His mission. And as He turned away, an exultant consciousness of power must have been singing in His heart. But why does the record immediately say that Jesus was "led . . . into the wilderness to be tempted"? Simply because such is the normal order of events in human experience. Every new gift brings with it new temptations. Personal freedom is one of

the most dangerous tools with which immature fingers ever played. Consciousness of power invites all satanic tests. Not so much because He went up into the mount of privilege as because He came down unscathed is Jesus entitled to stand before mankind as an example.

But a second thought grows out of this one. If David's position afforded no immunity from evil neither could it make a wrong thing right. Adultery was not a whit less foul though committed by a king. Falsehood was as base in David's mouth as in a scullion's. Violence was more "red-handed," if possible, when perpetrated by perfumed fingers. I happened, as a child, to hear two ministers discussing the ethics of a lie. One maintained the justification of falsehood under certain extreme conditions. He instanced cases in which falsehood had saved human life—as, for example, when the physician assures his patient of recovery and so helps to secure that doubtful end, or

as when a military commander lies to save a refugee from his pursuers. I remember how vehemently the minister argued; but his opponent stood unalterably firm. Better that the heavens fall, he rejoined, than that a son of God should ever soil his lips with falsehood. I believe that the old doctrine is sound. No amount of fine livery can transform wrong into right. The conduct which needs to justify itself by argument is hazardous at least. Eternal distinctions must be permitted to stand. In a recent instance of "Jersey justice" the judge rigorously excluded all evidence tending to show justification of the defendant's crime. The question for the jury to decide was, not whether one man had *reason* for trying to kill another, but whether he deliberately tried to do it. The defendant's counsel fought hard. He alleged all manner of precedents against the damnatory charge. But the judge was firm in his contention, and the jury brought in a verdict of guilty.

They did not assume to pass upon the defendant's feelings. They simply affirmed that crime is black.

Such must always be the final judgment of mankind. There are no "chartered libertines." Vespasian's cruelty is by no means modified by his possession of splendid talents. Luther's intolerance is not mitigated by the fact of his greatness as a reformer. Byron was as reprehensible for his immorality as though he had never written a beautiful line. Deception and fraud are the same in politics as in religion. No man can climb so high as to be excusable for his sins. No temperamental differences can make wrong right. God never confuses judgment. There are many human voices to palliate men's evil. I heard a good woman say recently that we ought not to insist upon chastity among great geniuses. What a creed for a good woman to espouse! We shall need a better creed than that before the kingdom of righteousness will be likely to

come. Modern philosophy shakes the foundations when she attempts to shade off the differences between right and wrong.

But a further truth stands out from this pitiful old picture: the connectedness of evil. It is possible that David saw no further than the gratification of the hour. He was bent on having the thing he wanted. But before he was through he had added murder to a crime already great. One wrong to cover another—such is the way of the world. Sin is a net: when one's feet are once enmeshed only God knows the issue. A lad played truant. That was all the harm he intended. But the fact leaked out and he was called upon for explanation. For a moment he tried to evade the question, but ultimately, rather than admit the first mistake, he made a second, and was punished for two offenses instead of one. The old proverb declares that "a man who will steal will lie;" which I take to mean,

not simply that thieving makes falsehood easier, but that the thief is likely to need to tell a falsehood to save himself from harm. Things move in series. The particles of a crystal arrange themselves in a geometrical figure. Leaves hang in clusters. Even the planets move in systems. When a man does well he makes the whole universe his friend; when he sins the very "stars in their courses" are against him. Such a character as that of Lord Shaftesbury is only to be explained by the logic of a fixed choice. He was, as the world knew him in his maturity, the bulwark of every national reform. He made himself a voice for the weak and downtrodden. When his official day was over he went down into the streets after the outcasts. He once said that he could not bear to die and leave the world with so much suffering in it. No wonder that when he died a whole nation "bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother." Such a life is not an exotic.

It is perfectly explicable in terms of first choices and fixed ideals. Some single preference held the potentiality of the whole. Some humble act of unselfishness paved the way to years of blessing.

A recent critique of Thomas Carlyle says some drastic things about that untamed spirit. But no one could be so severe against him as Thomas Carlyle was against himself. The world cannot forget his lament at the grave of his wife: "If I had only known!" If he "had only known" what? If he had only known how unkindness breeds and grows. He had begun with single hateful words. Year by year he had grown more censorious and domineering. At last he broke her heart. Then he knew what he had done. And he took up a daily pilgrimage to the grave of the wife his unkindness had killed. If he "had only known"! We cannot know the results of a first unkindness, a first illicit choice. An indulgence that costs but a dime may

bankrupt us ere we are through. One outbreak of unholy passion may defile the springs of an entire life. Thus it happened with David. He never fully outgrew the effects of that shameful sin. First he lost the child Bath-sheba bore him. Then came the scourge of incest into his home. Then the revolt of Absalom, with all its train of suffering and grief. Thus

> "Of our pleasant vices
> Doth Heaven make whips to scourge us."

David's sin was the turning of the road. Up to that moment the stars seemed to smile on him; thereafter, though he found forgiveness of his fault, the heavens were veiled. It cannot be otherwise. The universe is God's. Its movement is for righteousness. The word we speak into it may live a thousand years. The hand we lay upon it makes it either our friend or our foe. To sow kindness, and chastity, and truth, is the only assurance of a harvest at which we shall not be ashamed.

V

THE HOPELESSNESS OF FLIGHT

O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.—Psalm lv, 6.

THE HOPELESSNESS OF FLIGHT

You can hear the pant of a soul in the familiar words. David craved nothing so earnestly as to be permitted to get away, to be at rest by flight. For years he had been battling against adversity, taking incessant "arms against a sea of troubles." But for his stout heart David must have yielded before. The glow of his spirits alone kept patriotism alive among the loyalists. Somewhat of the old power which had charmed Saul's madness and captured his countrymen now kept the last few friends from falling away. But David was tired of struggling. Driven from familiar scenes and faces, hunted "like a partridge upon the mountains" by the graceless offspring of his own loins, worse hurt by treachery than by all hunger and cold and loss, David was tired. The last blow had been too much—Ahithophel had gone over to the enemy. David had not the strength

to brace himself against this new calamity. He reeled and staggered and fell: on his knees, as the devout soul always falls. David asked for nothing now except to get away. Let Absalom have the kingdom; let impious hands be laid upon the holy vessels; let God look after His own affairs, but let David get away. Hear him pray it: "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

How human and intelligible is that heart cry! To let go, to get away, to be at rest—there are seasons during whose passage the heart can phrase no other prayer. I can remember how my mother used to pray it concerning housekeeping. Some women seem never to get tired of pots and kettles, of making beds and mending garments. They scrub on year after year without protest or plea for release. They possess a sort of exuberant vitality which delights to spend itself in domestic duties. My mother was not so.

Frail little body, a sufferer much of the time, she was constantly overdoing and overdone. Days were in which she felt too weary to think of another meal; and I can remember the wistful look in her eyes as she would say, across the table, "How I would like to forget all about housekeeping for a whole year." She never got that year's respite. There was always the parsonage, and there were always her boys. Somehow she never could feel that the time to rest had really come, until that afternoon when a celestial door swung noiselessly and she was gone.

This is also the experience of men of affairs. Every healthy man has a certain amount of native resilience. Opposition wakes up the best in him. Difficulty feeds him as with supernatural bread. He fairly delights in the abstruseness of the problems which confront him. There is positive exhilaration in working his way out of a trying situation—up to a certain point. But at that point human nature

begins to wince and sag, and, soon or late, the moment arrives at which the pluckiest soul would give worlds to be out of the contest. It would be almost heaven not to have to think of markets or prices or competition. In countless faces is a look which, could we read it, is a fresh rephrasing of David's cry: "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

It takes a long time, usually, for sickness to beat out the love of life. I have known bedridden invalids who, after a score of years of suffering, still clung to life with amazing tenacity. The love of life is strong. "All that a man hath will he give for his life," and when he has nothing more to give he would fain borrow, to bribe the Destroyer. "All my possessions for another moment of life," cried the dying Elizabeth. But even the love of life can die. I have seen it die in the faces of my friends. The day comes when sickness is no longer endurable and

the sufferer longs with unutterable yearning to be away. Not even the grave seems so dark in prospect as the sick room has grown to be. Souls will face anything—the "undiscovered country," the Judgment Seat, even the horror of extinction—rather than bear for another day the torment of living. How many brave hearts have cried up from the furnace of physical distress, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

At rest with self and God—such was the goal of the contemplative life as exalted in the early Church. We can afford to pour no scorn upon the movement. We do violence to our own intelligence when we deride the spirit which sent men off to cave and cloister. Quietism is of every age. Saint Simon and Saint Francis are reproduced in modern types. They were wrong, doubtless, in their idea of freedom, but they were grand in their determination to be free. He who has never

experienced that longing has never truly felt his sin. It was a divine impulse in Jerome and Benedict which, misunderstood, tempted them to draw away from men and things. It was the divine protest in Tauler and Fénelon which expressed itself in their beautiful but inadequate mysticism. It is a divine stirring in the hearts of the Keswick disciples which clothes itself in their tender devotion and unruffled spirit. And it is a divinity in us which sometimes cries imperiously, up through the shallow living and engulfing worldliness of our day, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

There is no question as to the veraciousness of this heart cry of David. It easily translates itself into the most earnest language of our hearts. "Deep calleth unto deep." No man will ever grow out of the possibility of uttering this cry afresh. No work is so precious, no cause so splendid, but in its presence the devotee

may falter and cry for rest. We rarely make account of the discouraging days that must come to a genius like Marconi or Tesla. The public sees only his perfected work. It cannot behold the broken tools, the futile tests which nearly drove the inventor mad. Critics have sometimes found fault with Lincoln's jocoseness. Playing with words while his country was staggering with pain! Poor critics, who have not yet pondered deeply enough to realize that Lincoln's playfulness covered the anguish of his great sad nature! Let us read again the meaning of the lines in that saddest of faces; hear afresh the few plaintive words that broke from his soul like a sob, that we may know, anew, what of dismay and terror it cost our "Father Abraham" to lead forth his people. How many immortal verses such as Browning's and Tennyson have gone into the basket or the fire! How many authors, in an agony of discontent, have vowed they would

never write another line. I suppose that Da Vinci sometimes wished he could run away from the labor of his own "Last Supper" and Correggio was tempted to fling the brush from his "Annunciation." Even the buoyant Paul experienced moments in which he counted it far better to "depart." And we see Him who was "made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor," reach out His hand to push away the cup of bitterness: "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." Ah, it is no mark of shame that we have sometimes cried out to be away. That cry is only the piteous pleading of a wrung heart catching the mood of David: "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest."

The mistake is in supposing that a soul ever really escapes from trouble by flying away from it inopportunely. Recall what David sang in a later Psalm concerning the likelihood of escaping by running

away: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me." David had evidently learned that the only way to get away from an outraged Deity was by remaining at home and doing his duty. Once he prayed for the wings of a dove, but in this Psalm he admits that wings would do him small good if he had them. What David found to be true as respects God holds equally true in the matter of all duty. The whole universe throbs with the divine presence and there is no corner in which a soul may hide from duty. So long as memory endures there can be no freedom by running away. Arthur

Dimmesdale, in Hawthorne's famous story, tried to get clear of his trouble by running away from it. It seemed to him that he could bear the agony no longer. A vessel was about to sail for England, and Dimmesdale would fain shed his old life by sailing away from it. At the thought of release his whole being quivered. He would put the wide ocean between him and his sin. But you will recall that he did not leave America as he had planned. Peace for him lay not in distance but in confession. He remained at home, and amid the conflicting clamors of wonder and dismay he turned from the church toward the pillory. There, in the sight of all, he told the story of his sin and found the rest his heart was craving.

I have read somewhere of a hospital patient who, in an agony of pain, rushed from the hospital ward out into the crowded street—anywhere, anywhere, to be rid of the suffering! But escape from

the hospital was not escape from suffering. Every further step increased the torment until, after a few minutes of useless running, the poor fellow sank helpless on the pavement. Poor soul! he was not the first to run away from the place that alone promised help. The surgeons who had hurt him had hurt that they might help, and his running away cost him his life. No sufferer can find rest by fleeing from suffering. He but fans the flames which already scorch him. To meet pain as its superior, to reach for its heart and meaning, to claim the thorn as a friend, is the only true escape.

"Such a cruel wound in my palm
Made the thorny rod in my grasp,
That in anguish cried my heart
For a touch of the healing art:
But too deep lay the wound for balm,
And I dared not loose the galling grasp.

"Low and soft there whispered a voice,
'Grasp it high above the thorns.'
And a lesson sweet I learned,
As the rod to staff was turned,
That the vexing thing may be blessing choice
If only we reach above the thorns."

It is a common thing to hear men talk of "drowning sorrow." From a wife's deathbed or the loss of a child they often plunge into a vortex of open riot or quiet dissipation. By a series of gaudy pictures they hope to make their hearts forget the tearful images. In the stream of Lethe they hope to bury their great grief. What folly to talk of drowning sorrow! No gulf of worldliness was ever deep enough to cover a real sorrow. Grief is left after wine and gayety have spent their power. We can never hope to obey that hymn which exhorts to "Go, bury thy sorrow." Sorrow cannot be buried alive. It will not stay buried. Through the hasty sod it will thrust up its reproachful head. The Christian thing to do with sorrow is to meet it courageously, to live with it conqueringly, until, at its death, its beautiful mark is left upon the heart.

There is, then, a better gift than the wings of a dove. There is a finer, completer rest than was ever found by flying

away. And it was this rest that Jesus referred to when He said, "Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest." I suppose that most people have looked upon that invitation as an invitation to get away from trouble; away from pain. The rest Jesus offered was of no such ignoble sort. His rest is not the rest of release-ment, but of possession. He was not promising to let men off, He was promising to let them deeper in. He by no means agreed to hide them from the storm, He only agreed to hide them "in the heart of the storm." During the passage of a terrific western cyclone a little child was picked up from her play, carried a considerable distance, and finally set down as gently as a mother might have done it. Searchers expected to find the little one hopelessly crushed by the fury of the storm. Judge, then, their amazement when she looked up into their faces with a smile. She had been hid in the heart of the storm. It is the rim of the

whirlwind, according to scientific opinion, which works the harm. Within that wild circumference is a center comparatively calm, and into that center the child had been strangely caught. In the heart of the storm she had been safe. Thank God for the suggestion that the storm has a heart! It is for us to find it—nay, for Christ to help us find it. Not immunity from shock and upheaval, but a hiding in the heart of the storm, is what Jesus pledges.

It was once said to Collis P. Huntington that to accomplish so much he must "work hard." "Not at all," was his reply; "I don't work hard: I work easy." Whatever Mr. Huntington may have meant his words have a forceful ring. The art of life is not to get away from work but to "work easy." It is not work that kills, it is worry. The longest lived and the happiest man, surely, is he who has learned to find pleasure in his toil. He does not require frequent vacations.

If work tires his body it rests his heart. "The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life" consists partly in finding happiness in labor. That was what Jesus meant when He pledged "joy" to His disciples. It is what He means when He offers the "rest" of His yoke. The wheel out of true grinds and wears. Machinery in running order, with bearings oiled and joints sound, moving as if motion were a veritable joy, is a fitting type of life. That which a man was made to do he ought to do with pleasure. Birds sing while they build. The dog runs, and the trotting horse drops into his swinging gait with evident satisfaction. So ought it to be with the appointed toil and burden-bearing of human life. Harmony means happiness. Not the wings of a dove to bear the laborer away from toil, but the Master's secret of rest in toil, is our urgent need.

One application more. The only way to "get away from God" is to go to God. What have men not done in the effort to

get away from Him! "Conscience doth make cowards of us all." The first impulse of a man in whose soul the barb of conviction has hooked is to run away. He longs for the wings of a dove that he may fly beyond the reach of God. Somewhere beyond the stars, perhaps, he hopes to find a place where even the guilty may rest. For that sort of rest men of every age have been searching, and have never found it. They always come back to the admission, conscious or otherwise, that the way to be at peace with God is to hide in God. This is the rest which Jesus promises a sinner; this the peace which passeth knowledge—the calm of contrition and pardon.

"At sunset, when the rosy light was dying
Far down the pathway of the west,
I saw a lonely dove in silence flying
To be at rest.

"'Pilgrim of air,' I cried, 'could I but borrow
Thy wandering wings, thy freedom blest,
I'd fly away from every care and sorrow
And find my rest!'

"But when the dusk a filmy veil was weaving
Back came the dove to seek her nest;
Deep in the forest where her mate was grieving—
There was true rest.

"Peace, heart of mine! no longer sigh to wander;
Lose not thy life in fruitless quest.
There are no happy islands over yonder;
Come home and rest."

VI

WHEN THE MAJORITY WERE WRONG

And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it. But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report.—Numbers xiii, 30-32.

WHEN THE MAJORITY WERE WRONG

Two reports were brought in by the prospecting committee which Moses had appointed. The intervening years since that memorable night when Israel passed out of Egypt had been crowded full of marvel and surprise. A race of slaves had become a nomadic army. Under the consummate leadership of Moses the children of Israel had partially learned the real lesson of civilization, the secret of "living together." And now at length they stood facing the land toward which all hearts were yearning. The time was ripe. Everything hinged upon a concerted movement to take possession. But the people must deliberately choose. Moses could lead them only with their will. Accordingly, a committee was representatively appointed, one member from each tribe, through whose eyes the people might see the land and upon the basis of whose report they might act.

The various members of the committee did their work. Forty days they spent in the wonderful new territory. They climbed its hills, forded its rivers, and spied out its strongest cities. They tasted its fruits and sampled its grains, and finally were ready with their report. We can almost picture the popular enthusiasm as two committeemen came into the midst of the assemblage bearing a single magnificent grape cluster between them. All twelve members had the same beauties to describe. Canaan fully justified the description of it given to Israel years before, "a land flowing with milk and honey." So far the committee agreed. But when it came to recommendations the report divided: two of the spies favored an immediate advance, the other ten advised delay, if not retreat.

So far as historic value is concerned, I suppose, we might properly dismiss the whole situation. We have no particular interest in what Caleb said, or Palti.

Whether Israel accepted the recommendation of the majority or that of the minority is for us a matter of comparative unimportance. Canaan was won and lost so many times that, except for the bearing of this special incident upon subsequent Jewish history, and more especially for its trenchant message to all lives, we might forget it. But because that ancient picture is perpetually reproduced; because those variant attitudes of manhood stand for eternal types; because men in every age are in danger of accepting as final the judgment of the majority instead of following an intrepid minority to the dominion of all powers, this familiar narrative is vital and moving still. Centuries have taken nothing from its rich significance. It belongs to our age with freshened emphasis. And certain features stand forth with burning message for modern men.

First, this: that all earnest living is a coming up to, and an entrance upon, some

divine inheritance. Wiseacres have labored to give us a competent statement of the mutual relationships of God and man in human history. I know not where to find a more beautiful putting of the case than here. Calvinist and Arminian might long ago have come together in the truth of this vivid picture. God gives nothing outright; man attains nothing unaided. God is always marking off new territory for man's inheritance, some particular "promised land:" man's business is to enter and possess it. Canaan was in God's thought before it was in Moses's. From eternity that particular land had been set off for a particular people. Israel's business was to take possession of that which by divine appointment was already hers. When at length she had subjugated it she had but laid valid claim to what, in the divine purpose, belonged to her from the beginning.

There is no such thing as staking off

new claims in life. If they ever become ours honestly they have always been ours in God's thought. Our best achievements are but the attainment of divine ideals. The territories we laboriously subdue were devised to us in heavenly testament. A new strip of Indian land was recently opened. None so poor but might have a homestead if he would only assert a claim before the acres were all taken. What a wild rush there was. But for the better methods employed in this new instance the disgraceful scramble of Oklahoma would have been repeated. Each applicant, according to the order of his entry, was assigned a certain number and permitted to stake out his claim, beforehand, upon the map. But after the new settlers had taken full possession, after they had made the territory theirs by actual occupation, they had simply entered into a governmental privilege without which their title would have been invalid.

No son ever yet surpassed his mother's

hopes. Let him graduate with honor—she knew beforehand that he would. Let him paint a picture or carve a statue, it will never be finer than in her heart she had always insisted he could produce. Let him win a sweet woman's love, that woman, according to his mother, is never quite good enough for him. Let him attain a senatorship or a cabinet position and his mother will simply maintain that he could fill the presidency with equal honor. There is something very beautiful about the way a mother appropriates the universe for her child and is never a whit surprised when he wins a part of it. It was what she all the time meant him to have. All of which is simply an illustration of the truth this scripture teaches. God is forever thinking sublime thoughts and making holy preparations for His children. What Jesus said to the disciples is a type of the divine method: "I go to prepare . . . for you." Canaan was ready even while Israel was still groan-

ing under her taskmasters in Egypt. God had great purposes for Israel while as yet Israel had none for herself. And when at length Israel had entered into Canaan she had only done that for which God had been leading her out from Egypt. With all her shrewdness and valor she could not outrun His thoughts. He had hoped for her all that she could possibly attain—and infinitely more. Let us remember this for ourselves. We are living, if we are living intelligently at all, to fulfill God's purposes concerning us. We shall scarcely, then, surprise Him by our smartness. He has concerning us hopes that we have not realized or dreamed of as yet. And if sometime one of us win commanding eminence or power, if he attain at length a perfect mastery of self, whatever the royal Canaan he may enter and possess, he has only secured that which the Heavenly Father assigned to him in the beginning.

But here I note a second lesson from

this old scripture. That was a wonderful moment when Israel stood facing Canaan and had her first glimpse of the Promised Land. Toward this land they had been journeying for weary months. This was the country whose very name had been music to faltering hearts. And now they were so close that they could almost smell its meadows and count the trees that fringed its shores. Their scouts brought back its figs, its grapes, its pomegranates. That wonderful first vision—how much it meant! There is in the history of every great reform, every spiritual enrichment, a moment in which its real glory is first beheld. Without such visions there would be no victories. God expects no man to fight except in full view of trophies to be won. Endurance should be intelligent rather than grim. "Moses endured as seeing." And concerning our divine Master it is written that, "for the joy that was set before Him," He "endured the cross, despising

the shame." It is part of God's providential arrangement that men shall have glimpses of the Canaan to whose conquest He summons them.

I have tried to imagine the thrill of the moment when the Pilgrims saw land across the *Mayflower's* bow. Returning travelers often speak of the peculiar pleasure of beholding the shores of the home land, but I am sure that the Massachusetts coast can never be to returning pilgrims what it was to that little pioneer band which had come across the sea to inherit a land of promise. For it the Pilgrims had left their Egyptian taskmasters behind. Toward it their eyes had long been straining. In its acres they were to serve and glorify their God. Come what might, they had seen their Canaan.

Such a moment came to our "Father Abraham" when the full truth of emancipation burst upon him. It had been a word for politicians to conjure with.

Sad to say, the most sacred passwords are mere shibboleths in party usage. Platforms are built, not with a view to serving the age, but for getting the most votes. It was so when Lincoln was elected. The Emancipation plank went into the party platform as the Free-Silver plank and Anti-Imperialist plank did in later years—a bid for votes. But there came an hour when the margin of a real Canaan outlined itself before Mr. Lincoln's thought—the Canaan of freedom for the black man at the South. We are still too close to the Cuban War to view it in its true light. Our ears are full of the bedlam of conflicting commercial interests. But that was a great moment, one of the holy moments of human history, when our obligation to Cuba really dawned upon the American people. For a score of years prophets had declared that obligation. Twenty-five years ago Henry Ward Beecher preached a sermon on "Cuba and the Brotherhood of Na-

tions." Now and again through the years some popular leader would point to that garden land of the Southern Sea. For years we were coming up to it like the Israelites to Canaan. But at last the real moment came; a whole people saw the truth, and an army and navy went forth to battle for it.

So it will be with the various reforms which our country is urgently needing. It is never sufficient that only the leaders see a vision. People must see it for themselves. They must stand as the Hebrews did, at the hither side of Jordan, gazing across at "fields of living green." The kingdom of temperance will come, not when the prophets say it is due, but when the common people really see the beauty of it. Mrs. Carrie Nation cannot smash saloon fixtures fast enough to usher in the reign of abstinence. But when, through the education of the press and the sight of whisky havoc, we as a people are persuaded that the Canaan of

temperance is worth taking we shall go up and possess the land. Likewise, we shall have kinder social laws, a fairer competitive system, and cleaner cities just so soon as, and not until, the people want these things. The people really make the decision. All that a Moses can do is to faithfully lead his people to a point from which they may descry for themselves the Promised Land.

Let us apply this truth to the lives of individual men. Soon or late there comes to every young soul a glimpse of the Canaan toward which God is leading. Indeed no one is a profitable student until he has caught a vision of his birthright. Books can do very little for the pupil who has no fixed goal in life. To graduate from school or college without a life-work in view is dubious attainment. But let a young soul really see the land to which God summons, and from that moment life is altered. Books are transfigured, souls are set on fire by such a

vision. It is possible, I suppose, for a man to continue in business a good many years without realizing that life holds the possibility of a Canaan more choice and sacred than that of making money. A woman may long devote herself to cards and social vanities, hardly waking to the fact that womanhood can win nobler things than a prize at whist or attention in society. But, on the other hand, there comes, I believe, to every soul a vision like that accorded to the Hebrews at the margin of Jordan, a vision of Canaan beyond. That life still remains stale and thin proves only that souls have turned away as did Israel from Canaan. Sometimes God breaks through a man's hardness, past a woman's frivolities and social shams, to fill a heart with light. Nothing can take away the glory of that moment. Heaven is near when a soul first discovers what God would have it to do.

I have talked with skeptics who laughed my faith to scorn. Their creed

was a negation, and they declared they were happy in it. They had only pity for benighted folks who continue to believe. Yet there have been better moments in the denier's life—moments in which he tasted the grapes and pomegranates of the Canaan of a Christian life; moments in which whole continents of grace stood in clear panorama before him. I never believe the infidel who tells me he is satisfied with his creed. Only an Israelite who had never caught a glimpse of Canaan could be contented in the desert. No heart quite forgets its best seasons. In an unguarded moment they troop through memory. It is not because he has forgotten that the unbeliever is so blatant with his doubts: it is because he cannot forget. He had his vision.

Beyond the Promised Lands of which we have been speaking is a fairer than them all. John had a vision of it on Patmos. Paul on the Damascus road caught sight of it. The Magdalen

glimpsed it in the Saviour's eyes. It is the sight of this Canaan which makes it easy to die. How many invalids have fought and struggled until they caught that vision, and then settled back into a holy, ineffable calm! A young woman was dying of consumption. More than once she had said that if she thought she could not get well she should certainly "go crazy." But the other night the heavens opened, the celestial Canaan appeared, and she came back to conscious suffering with a wonderful light in her face and a heart at perfect rest. Thank God for those moments in life when the curtain is drawn aside, and we see the Country toward which God is leading us!

But, whatever the Canaan, there is always this to say: its practical value for our lives turns upon which report of the committee we adopt. The Israelites went back from their ravishing vision to spend thirty-eight years in wandering. Not one of those who discredited the

favorable report of Caleb and Joshua was permitted to set foot in Canaan. Israel herself made the hard bed on which she was compelled to lie. So far as we can see, the story of wandering and hardship in the wilderness need never have been written. God crowds no man into acceptance of His gifts, nor does He blind to the difficulties in the way. Caleb and Joshua did not intimate that the Land of Promise would be won without a struggle. They simply affirmed, "We are well able to overcome it." That is a terrific utterance of Jesus: "He that believeth not shall be damned." But such declaration holds the hard common sense of life. No great gift was ever seized by an unbelieving hand. No victory was ever achieved by fearful soldiers. New continents of power and grace lie open only to the man of faith. "If thou believest, thou mayest," is the word for every age.

Whether or not we enter Canaan, rests

with us. God gives the vision of it, man decides whether or not he will enter in. The tragedy of life is that men may turn away from the margin of the richest possessions. Dr. Hall, in his *Gospel of the Divine Sacrifice,* calls attention to a most significant fact in the ceremony of the coronation of the Czar. The Czar crowns himself. The whole spectacle is grand with a magnificence which we of the Western Hemisphere can scarcely conceive. No pen can adequately put the picture into words. But the most impressive feature of the whole stately ceremonial may be chronicled in the simplest speech—the Czar crowns himself. No dignitary of Church or State is exalted enough to crown him. Other hands may bring him the crown: the Czar must put it on. When the crown was set on the head of Nicholas he had put it there himself. The Czar of all the Russias, owning allegiance to none but God, must effect his own coronation. Such is the stupendous

responsibility of being a man. Every soul must crown itself. God prepares the diadem as He prepared Canaan for the Jews; man may assume it or put it aside. The human spirit is supreme within its own realms; within those realms not even God will come uninvited. Man is a king. He must crown himself. Canaan is his for the effort; not even God can force him to occupy it. Such is our sovereignty. Of all the fields that lie open to human endeavor, of all the masteries that a man may win, of all the inheritance that belongs to the child of a King, it can only be said, We must personally enter and take possession.

Then we must needs be careful how we choose. The majority is not always a safe guide. Our form of government carries with it an underlying assumption that majorities, by virtue of being such, are right. Yet there is hardly a political crime but has been sanctioned by a sometime majority. "The voice of the peo-

ple" is not "the voice of God" except as the conscience behind the voice has been educated. In this ancient story the ten were wrong, the two were right. Israel suffered grievously because she refused to accept the suggestion of the minority. God must speak through minorities before He can speak through majorities. The supreme thing is to ascertain His will. To know His will and do it, to believe in His grace and care, to start bravely for the Canaan which He reveals, is to find the way to all peace and mastery.

VII

INGLORIOUS COMPROMISES

I will surely rend the kingdom from thee.—
1 Kings xi, 11.

THIS hard sentence is a solemn commentary on the importance of certain admonitions given to Solomon years before. Twice had he been warned against the very sin which swept him from his feet, and afterward rent his kingdom. I doubt if the warnings greatly impressed him at the time. He listened, I suppose, as most folks do when they are exhorted against follies which they expect never to commit. He seemed so safe and strong. He had, probably, not the slightest inclination, in those earlier years, to do the forbidden thing. He was David's favorite son, by the woman for whose beauty David had staked his crown; reared in all integrity and wisdom; loved with the intensity of a woman who, by loving, would make atonement for her sin; heir presumptive to a throne at its greatest power and splendor. All stars seemed kind. Enemies made haste to sue for favor; friend vied

with friend to do him honor. To him was accorded the royal privilege for which his father would have given half the kingdom —the building of the Temple. He made a regal choice of talent forever associated with his name. He became so rich and famous that foreign potentates made pilgrimage to behold his treasure. He had, in short, all that heart could wish or kingliness require. Yet the closing chapters of his life are full of gloom and terror. No sadder book than Ecclesiastes was ever penned; and Ecclesiastes is Solomon's summing up of life. All the rich melody of his early life died out into a moan. The cups he drained held more dregs than nectar. Eventide belied the rosy promise of morning. A broken, weary, disappointed man, we hear him crying "All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

Nothing is much sadder than the spectacle of a cynical old age. To pass through life and be sorry to have come this way at all; to have only scorn for the paths that

one has traversed; to sit and wait for the ringing down of the curtain over a pitiful "comedy of errors," is desolation indeed. "Would that I had served my God as faithfully as I have served my king," was the wail of Wolsey. Age, for him, held little besides remorse and terror. Cast off by the monarch for whom he had sacrificed so much; flung away like a sucked orange upon a rubbish heap; dying in poverty and shame, with scarce a friend to close his eyes—such is the picture. History gives us a few fitful glimpses of Bonaparte on St. Helena. There was nothing behind but ashes, nothing ahead but death. More melancholy and desperate he grew until his marvelous mind clouded with its own vapors. Somewhere I have seen a picture of him as he was in those days, the deep-set eyes sunk in great wells of sorrow, the sensitive features marred and pinched by chagrin, a world conqueror conquered by grief—a figure of unspeakable pathos. You may recall the

testimony of Chesterfield near the close of his luxurious life. He had been pattern "gentleman" for England. Yet this is what he said as representing his summary of existence: "I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their futility and do not regret their loss. I have been behind the scenes and seen all the coarse pulleys which exhibit and move all the gaudy machines that excite the admiration of the ignorant audience." Clay, Greeley, Blaine, all died of broken heart. They swept the whole keyboard of ambition and defeat, and came down to the evening of their days disappointed and unconsoled. I recall an aged man who had touched life in its variant moods. He had thrilled with the rarest wine and danced to the merriest music. He had lived beyond the appointed span of years. And as he lay upon his deathbed, and his children gathered around, he had only a legacy of remorse and tears to leave—only sorrow to have lived at all.

There is naught much sadder than such a spectacle.

But it is the disobedient life only which runs down hill at last. The last chapter ought to be the best of the story if the story be written well. The best wine is for the end of the feast, to the servants and guest friends of God. I have seen old folks whose declining years were like the calm of summer evening, full of fragrance and song of birds. Old age is only harvest time. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" It certainly was by no cruelty of God that Benedict Arnold's last days were full of horror. Charles IX only reaped of the sowing of St. Bartholomew when his waking moods and dreaming fancies were soaked with blood. Herod simply proved the constancy of Nature when violence brought violence upon his own head.

It is said that not long before the French Revolution Louis was riding in the vicinage of his magnificent palace at

Versailles. In the road he met a peasant bearing a rude coffin. "What died the man of?" he asked in transient pity. "Of hunger, sire," was the response. But the call of the hunting horn was in his ears, and Louis soon forgot the occasion. I wonder if, when a few months later he stood before the scaffold and looked out across a sea of faces that knew no pity, he remembered that they that sow the wind shall reap the whirlwind. Carlyle says that Foulon was once asked how the starving populace was to live, and answered brutally, "Let them eat grass." When, afterward, they caught him in the streets of Paris, stuck his head upon a pike and stuffed his mouth with grass, the mob simply added poetic touch to the inexorable justice of God's world. The terrible Sepoy rebellion in India is another familiar illustration of the working of this law. For years the English governors had systematically impoverished the natives. Burke made a terrible arraignment

of the outrage and a trifling fine was imposed upon Governor Hastings. But the "mills of the gods" grind terribly, even if slowly, and England's day of reaping arrived. At last the Indians mutinied. The streets were piled with the corpses of Englishmen, their wives, and their children. Fraud and rapine came home at last, and England reaped in tears what she had sowed in crime. The law is universal. No state or individual may hope to find exemption. God has written in the constitution of the world, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Only thus can we explain the bitterness and cynicism of Solomon's old age. "Man's sins are seeds, his sufferings harvest." Solomon had come to the reaping time. He had been led away from the best ideals. He had compromised with wrong, split differences with sin. In particular, he had violated conscience to please his foreign wives. He had erected heathen shrines within his realms. And

we may believe that his attitude in these special instances had grown to be his dominant mood. He had adopted the spirit of compromise, and he lost his way through compromise. Great stalwart figure that he was, he met defeat, not in open struggle, but by the insidious poison of compromise. And because that truckling spirit is in the air to-day, because men are learning the sinister side of shaded differences and obliterated distinctions, because philosophy has so many extenuating voices for the iniquities of men, we may let this old philosopher become our teacher for the hour.

One of the most obvious lessons of Solomon's career is the inadequacy of a single fine ideal. Solomon made one noble choice. He asked one of the rarest gifts a man can choose. He set before himself an ideal of wisdom, the "understanding heart," and according to our commonly accepted doctrine he ought to have come down to old age in peace and

honor. There is no text, I suppose, from which we preach more confidently than that of the sufficiency of first decisions. We are forever exhorting young people to the choice of high ideals. And, with certain important additions, our doctrine will stand. Obviously no soul climbs well until it has caught a vision of the heights. The runner must see the prize. It needed a passion for beauty to start Phidias and Turner. Watt and Stephenson would never have been heard of but for the dedication of themselves to revolutionary conceptions. Howard and Peabody began the foundations of an immortal fame when they discovered what God had for them to do. But let me emphasize this further thought: Howard and Peabody, Phidias and Turner, with all the rest of an immortal company, would have been lost among the crowd had their only capital been certain fine ideals. It needs more than a ravishing vision to make a man. God only knows the oratorios, as fine as

Handel's, which might have been written, but never were. It is said that the practical use of steam was really discovered two thousand years before the invention of an engine. I suppose there have been scores of men who matched Wilberforce and Fox in momentary feeling. The reason they failed to match them in achievement is that they failed to know how to feed the fires of their own genius. Noble impulse needs nurture as well as birth.

It is said in Scripture of a certain young man that he promptly replied to his father's commandments, "I go, sir," but afterward "went not." He meant to go. The significance of the parable is not that he was a scoundrel, but that he forgot. He lost the glory of the moment in which he promised. One of the most serious problems with which mechanical science has to deal arises from the constant deterioration of steel in truss and cable. Every year the great spans of the Brooklyn Bridge grow weaker. By reason of cer-

tain atomic changes in the metal it is purely a question of time when the vast structure will hopelessly sag. So with the iron work of our modern buildings: the day will come, unless science intervenes, when our sky-scraping structures must totter alarmingly. Engineers are already experimenting with electric currents as a means of toning up the jaded steel. I understand that the famous canvases of Doré and Munkacsy are gradually fading. Some artists claim that the paint was poorly mixed. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains that those masterpieces are fading out and will some day be lost. But what happens to steel and canvas happens also in human life. Men are constantly in danger of losing the freshness of first ideals. Years make changes in the vast cables that support immortal destinies. Time eats away the clear outline of our best visions. Hence the problem of human life is how to keep the old ideals unspoiled, unfaded. The genius of Raphael

lay, I should say, not so much in the flashes that came to him as in the glow that lingered. Men for generations hated slavery, but it required a hate such as burned in the breasts of Garrison and Lincoln to melt the fetters of a race. The prophet of the new age will be the man whose vision has become incarnate in himself. Not new genius, but new culture of genius already possessed, is a crying need of the day.

Let it be remembered, also, that the only way to feed a great gift is with the heart's best blood. That is an old story of the painter whose marvelous crimsons were the amazement of all beholders. Day by day his canvas grew in splendor. Paler and thinner became the man. Then at last the secret was out. It was very simple—and very hard: he had fed his brush from his veins; his heart had pumped vitality into his picture. It is only legend, to be sure, but it brims with the truth of God. Great genius must be backed by a great

heart. Here was Solomon's mistake. He thought it was enough that he should be great of brain. He asked only for gifts of wisdom. He played dilettante with the learning of the world. He forgot that a man's best blade must be tempered in the glow of his heart. He made the same mistake that our age is making: we are becoming idolatrous of brains. Heart, not head, must redeem and sanctify the world. As Dr. Hillis says, "Back of the emancipation proclamation stands a great heart named Lincoln. Back of Africa's new life stands a great heart named Livingstone. Back of the Sermon on the Mount stands earth's greatest heart, man's Saviour. Christ's truth is enlightening man's ignorance, but His tears, falling upon our earth, are washing away man's sin and woe."

There have been other voices, I suppose, as phenomenal as Jenny Lind's. She had no monopoly in the production of musical tone. But she sang out of her

heart, and when she sang she lifted vast audiences from their feet. "O that I may live two years longer, and be permitted to save money enough to complete my orphans' home," she wrote to a bosom friend. It was the orphans' helplessness which called through her marvelous notes. She became the mouthpiece of human suffering and she sang as one inspired. It was her heart that immortalized her voice. So it must be with business talent, with social gifts, with prided scholarship. Let it stand alone and it may only suffice to perpetuate one's name to a pitying new age. Let it be kindled at the altar of the heart and it may leave a track of light. "Out of the heart are the issues of life."

But let us notice another phase of Solomon's story. Not all his greatness sufficed to save him from becoming a woman's tool. The record affirms that he had a thousand wives. The number, however, is not intrinsic to the lesson of the story.

Take those thousand women together, they only succeeded in doing what one adroit woman can generally do with a man—master and bend him. I suppose that Solomon considered himself the master of his wives, but it was their mastery over him that rent away his kingdom. What folly is this that men talk concerning their lordship over creation? The best of us spend most of our strength executing some woman's will. It was Lucrezia Borgia who dominated the papacy in its most shameful days. It was Catherine de' Medici who really ordered the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day. It was a woman's fury which breathed through Robespierre. Take the staring crimes of any age, and at bottom, more or less consciously concerned, you will almost invariably find a woman. The records show that mobs led by women are the most desperate of all. Only God knows the full story of foul plots that have been hatched by women.

But if women have mastered men for evil they have also mastered them for good. Some of the tallest flowers our civilization bears were planted by our women. What savages and sluggards we should often become but for our women. The sweetest spur of my school-day labor was the thought of pleasing mother. How many a man must confess, with Lincoln, "All that I am I owe to my angel mother." Most heroes have been made such by woman—by mother or sweetheart or wife. What scenes the pitiful heavens have looked down upon in war times—men gathering courage from a caress of the cardboard likeness within their pockets; men fighting like tigers to be worthy of the women at home; men using their last breath to whisper a woman's name. Man's best achievements have been prompted, in many instances, by women. The noblest institutions of our day have drawn their peculiar quality from the heart of woman. It was Florence Nightingale who taught

the world how to treat its soldiers. It was Mary Lyon who opened a new door in education. It was Audubon's wife who saved him from failure and chagrin. It was Mary who held at her bosom the Son of God. Ah, women, you have power enough to shake and change the world! Speak, then, through men for good. Insist upon chastity and men will yield it. Stand for temperance, and the wineglass will lose part of its spell. Plead for humanity and the day of kindness will have dawned. The standard of its women is the standard of the world.

In closing let us notice just what it was that cost Solomon so dear. He compromised; that was all. He did not tear down the magnificent Temple he had reared; he simply built others for other gods. He wanted "peace at any price." He would rather offend the King of heaven than disturb his household. Everybody laughed at the supposititious horse trade in *David Harum* because everybody felt the sting.

Modern business is full of that spirit—the spirit of compromise. How many merchants there are, disdaining to tell a lie, yet permitting their clerks to do it for them every day. How many traders who would scorn the booty of a thief, yet as truly earn their living out of other people's losses. How many churchmen who shun the unclean thing, yet whose property is rented, year after year, for immoral purposes. Thus do we "whip the devil around the stump" of modern convention. Or take politics as an example. I am often amazed at the things to which a decent man will stoop for the sake of an election. Most politicians have a distinct code of morals for use in the political arena. Party success, they declare, demands concession—to which I have this to say: that a party which requires beer money, bribery, and falsehood from its candidates and retainers will serve the Lord best by dying.

Or bring the lesson of Solomon's con-

duct still nearer home. It is, presumably, an accepted principle with church members to be at church on Sunday. But let a friend "drop in," and most church members will quietly pocket their convictions and remain uncomplainingly at home. I have often wondered how unchurched friends can have any respect for those churchmen who, at the first shot, haul down the flag of loyalty. We need not "talk so loud in meeting" if we will but quietly live our creed.

So in various departments of life this warning holds good. An open foe is less dangerous than a half-hearted partisan. The meanest trait upon which God looks is compromise. "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." There was, there could be, but one issue to Solomon's compromise. His kingdom was divided. The issue is in every age the same. He who attempts to save a part by compromise ends by losing the whole.

VIII

THE COST OF A FIT OF TEMPER

Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also.—Numbers xx, 10, 11.

THE COST OF A FIT OF TEMPER

SOMETHING went radically wrong with Moses in this transaction. The verse following reveals the divine displeasure against him, and later Scripture refers to the mistake which cost him his hope of entrance into Canaan. The fault of which he was guilty is not, however, obvious at a casual reading. The narrative is so closely akin to certain others of the journey that one might run through it a half dozen times without noting essential difference. There was no novelty, surely, in the conduct of the people. Complaining was their chronic ailment. Whenever supplies ran short or the road seemed particularly tedious they whimpered like peevish children. Hardly had they left the "Egyptians dead upon the seashore" before they began to find fault with Moses for bringing them out of bondage to a land within whose confines they seemed likely to perish of thirst. The

present instance was but a tiresome repetition of former murmurings.

Nor was there anything superficially noteworthy in Moses's smiting of the rock with his rod. Once before he had used his rod for the purpose. At Horeb, nearly forty years agone, he had evoked springs from the blistering stone. The similarity of the whole transaction to an earlier and more familiar scene is striking.

But closer reading reveals a diameter of difference in the conduct of Moses on the two occasions. The Moses of Meribah Kadesh shows traits that did not before appear. His equilibrium is gone. He has evidently forgotten that he is merely the deputy of God. In a passion of impatience he lets his temper fly, and, instead of speaking to the rock, as God commanded, he rushes forward and smites it angrily.

It seems a trifling discrepancy of conduct—to strike instead of speaking.

Moses was exasperated almost beyond endurance. We marvel, indeed, that he did not smite some of the inglorious faces raised toward his own. Modern criminal courts often refuse to find a verdict against a prisoner whose provocation has been less great than was Moses's that day. Under the circumstances we could excuse him for almost anything. "No soul is saved for a single excellence or damned for a single sin." Yet because of the particular faults of which Moses was guilty that day—his disobedience and temper—he was shut out of Canaan. The only glimpse he ever got of the land of milk and honey, to lead toward which had been the vast achievement of his life, was from the heights of Pisgah.

Obviously there are no trifles in God's thought. Long tales may ordinarily be compressed into nutshells.

> "The massive gates of circumstance
> Are turned about the smallest hinge."

Some few years ago a certain merchant

vessel drove on the rocks. There was no adequate excuse, apparently. The night was neither dark nor stormy. The commander was the most experienced and trusted on the line. For a time the mystery went unexplained. Then, in the binnacle, they found a bit of steel, broken, obviously, from the knife of the man who had cleaned the binnacle. The cleaner himself had scarcely missed the fragment. Lying unobserved beneath the needle, that bit of steel had as surely defeated the purpose of the compass as if it had weighed a thousand pounds. It was not a quarter of an inch in length, yet long enough to wreck a ship of more than three hundred feet. The whole knife from which the fragment was broken cost perhaps a half dollar, yet that tiny fragment caused a loss of half a million. So a trifling deviation from the right course of human life may make all the difference between ultimate safe harbor and disaster on the rocks. With such delicate balance is the

universe constructed. Some one says that if one of the stars were deflected a quarter inch from its orbit the whole system of worlds would rush to chaos. There are no trifles. When Moses departed from God's rule at Meribah he was guilty of a blunder which the years could not rectify.

Let us consider the blunder which cost the lawgiver so dear. It fairly bristles with suggestions. Here is one of them: how a good man may neutralize his own influence for good. Moses lost caste with the people the moment he showed himself in temper. He came down to their ignoble level just when he assumed to stand most straight. He forfeited respect for the Kingdom he represented when he lapsed into general name-calling and recrimination. It is only too obvious that some of the world's best people are hard to love. They ought, according to all logic, to be the most considerate and accessible of men. They are perfect towers of integrity and strength. One would as soon

expect the Bartholdi statue to come down from its dignity and go wading around the shallows of New York harbor as for one of these sterling folks to bedabble himself with ordinary human weakness. And yet the fact is that a conscious prodigal, in search of sympathy and comfort, would be about as likely to go and lean against the aforesaid statue as against the lofty immaculate puritans of whom I speak.

A man said to me not long ago—and a good man, too—that if he could have his choice between conscientious churchmen and average men of the world he would choose, for companionship and pleasure, the children of the world. He did not impeach the virtue of the one nor condone the follies of the other. All he said was that in the common walks of life it was more comfortable to deal with ordinary sinners. And in a vital sense such sentiment is far-reaching compliment. That we ever refuse to come down to evil is

mortal affront to evildoers. There is no swifter way to get oneself disliked than by refusing to participate in the indulgence which another is planning for himself. I know of men who have lost their situations because they declined to take a drink or to work on Sunday. The world's choicest spirits have been cordially hated in their own generation for the very virtues which have made their names immortal. Jesus might have been King had He but lowered His ideal. The greatest compliment that could be paid Him by an unbelieving, sodden age was to hang Him upon a Cross; and in so far as we earn unpopularity by standing for the right we are entitled to the praise of God and man.

Yet even in our steadfastness of purpose we cannot afford to be savages and boors. One of the saddest spectacles in life is that of a stalwart soul whose goodness has dried out its kindness. It is possible to say "no" without using a mega-

phone. The most vehement temperance exhortations I have ever heard were uttered, without sound, by the simple downward turning of a glass. No substitute for a "soft answer" has ever been discovered as a means of "turning away wrath." It is a shame that our "good should be evil spoken of" simply because we are so clumsy in its use. I remember an elderly woman who, when I was a lad, always succeeded in making me hate the best graces she exemplified. She was a thoroughly consistent Christian. She would have plucked out her eyes rather than look with toleration upon evil. There was an obvious heroism about her daily life. I knew all this, and in a certain distant way revered her for it. Yet I remember that I would as soon have chosen to be turned into a pillar of salt as copy her style of virtue. She seemed always preaching down at me. Her good advices might as well have been ground out of a phonograph. Her excellence was, some-

how, unnatural and clammy. My mother rebuked my sins by putting her arm around me. Never did I feel myself so base a culprit as when she kissed me and forgave me before I had a chance to ask. She made me love the things she loved—they were so beautiful in her! We have not fulfilled our mission as Christians until we have made our virtues winsome. It will not suffice merely to leave a clean path. The Christliness of Christ is that countless thousands are longing to be like Him. "God commendeth his love toward us" by writing it in such tender language that our hearts instinctively respond. If our virtue repels men let us reexamine it with care. Real goodness should be as vital and refreshing as the flowers, as puissant as love itself.

But I notice a second item in this mistake of Moses. He illustrates the possibility of doing a good thing in a bad way. That he brought water out of the rock there is no gainsaying. Man and beast

were as truly refreshed as if he had performed his function in the mode appointed. He "got through his duty," as we say. But there was somewhat altogether unworthy in the method adopted by him. To do good things in ignoble ways is an inveterate human tendency. Take ordinary charity, for example. There are multitudes of unfortunates who would rather be struck with a club than to accept ordinary charity. Nor can I blame them. Too many benefactors like to stand on a pedestal and toss down their alms. The candidate for pity must go around to the back door. In a certain Western city, to which Andrew Carnegie had given a library, the Labor Unions met and repudiated the gift. They did not want his charity, they said. They wanted wages. They acted foolishly, no doubt, but by their action they at least illustrated a common human sentiment with which we must always reckon. Few self-respecting men want charity, as

charity is currently understood. A dog may be thankful for bones thrown to him because he is a dog; but a man, because he is a man, does not want his favors thrown at him. Lazarus, according to the story, "desired to be fed with crumbs from the rich man's table," but many a modern Lazarus would rather go hungry than accept such stately pity.

"Please, miss, will you buy something from my basket?" cried a hollow, joyless voice. "I'm sorry I cannot buy anything to-day," was the reply, "but your things look very pretty;" and pausing a moment by the child she touched the wan little face and said again, "I'm sorry I cannot buy anything from you to-day." "O, miss," said the child, her face lighting, "you've done me as much good as if you had bought. Most people push me away, but you have been kind to me and the day will not be so long." Real helpfulness never wears a tag. It is enough for the doer that he has performed a Christly act. He

asks no applause or formal vote of thanks. When the celebrated Oberlin was traveling in Germany, one winter, he was overtaken by a severe storm and, exhausted, lay down to perish. How long he slept he did not know, but he suddenly became conscious that some one was working over him. Together they journeyed on to the next village, when the wagoner turned to go. "Tell me your name," said Oberlin, "that I may at least have you in grateful remembrance before God." "I see," was the reply, "that you are a minister of the Gospel. Please tell me the name of the Good Samaritan." "That I cannot do," said Oberlin, "for it was not put on record." "Then," replied the wagoner, "until you can tell me his name please permit me to withhold mine."

Do we require to be profusely thanked for every alms we give? Would we be disappointed if, after sending some needy family a Thanksgiving dinner, another got the credit? Would it take the edge

off a generous contribution if it went unnoticed in the public prints? To such degree, then, we have missed the alphabet of love.

Courtesy is another grace that is often poorly performed. "Frozen politeness," some one describes it. It is as easy to freeze a soul with studied courtesy as with neglect. To be struck in the face might sometimes be less cruel than to be subjected to icy respect. There are folks who take great credit to themselves for never uttering an exceptionable word in the presence of rival or foe. But that is not the full test of courtesy—to merely refrain. It might be kinder to boil over with wrath than to damn by a frigid politeness. The most fiendish cruelty may be perpetrated by the mere lifting of an eyebrow or the altering of a tone. God forgive those who use the fair conventions of society to cloak the stiletto with which they stab a brother.

Forgiveness is another grace that may

be meanly shown. What a picture that is of Henry outside the gate at Canossa, pleading with the vicegerent of Jesus for forgiveness; waiting in the snow till every heart was touched save that of the unbending Pope; finally admitted on his knees and permitted to kiss the papal toe. Such is the torment through which we are sometimes inclined to put delinquents before we will grant forgiveness. Niggardly forgiveness is no true forgiveness at all. It is only another way of playing Shylock. When God forgives He forgives right royally. You may measure His deity by the magnificence of His pardon. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "I will remember them no more forever," is the divine assurance. As we measure up toward that ideal we may reckon our grade of attainment.

On that memorable morning in Manila Harbor, just as the signal for action was given, one of the powder boys dropped his

coat into the water. He asked permission to dive for it and was refused. A moment later he rushed to the other side of the vessel and leaped into the sea. The coat was saved, but the lad was thrust into irons. When the case came before Dewey the fact leaked out that a mother's photograph was in the pocket of the coat. The lad had been looking at it, and had put it away with a kiss when the firing order was issued. He had leaped overboard to save the picture. Commodore Dewey's eyes were glistening. "I forgive him fully," was the decision. "A boy who loves his mother well enough to risk his life for her picture cannot be kept in irons on this fleet." The only real forgiveness is like that—whole-hearted.

I might go on enumerating worthy things that are done unworthily. History is full of them. Modern life holds countless instances of noble endeavors neutralized by ignoble method; great ambitions foiled by petty meanness; holy causes de-

famed by unholy zeal. To do right things is not enough; they must be done in right ways.

There are two other significant lessons to be learned from this familiar incident. First, the apparently small cleavage between right and wrong. I do not assume to know what thoughts passed through Moses's mind as he went forward to smite the rock. Perhaps he felt that he was doing as nearly right as could be expected under the circumstances. That is the stock excuse of evil—that it is so nearly akin to good. A friend of mine took half an hour, not long ago, to convince me that dealing in stock margins is as legitimate business as the buying and selling of stocks outright. I am bound to admit that he made out a pretty strong case. He argued that if an investor had plenty of money to cover his possible "shorts" there was no moral reason in the world why he should refrain from purchasing stocks on ten per cent or any other margin. Is that

the whole story? There is hardly a namable wrong but can be justified by the processes of logic. It is said that a certain South American spider spreads itself like a gorgeous flower before the unwary insect. Traps must always be covered and alluringly baited. Even "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light." Here, then, is the point of danger, that we may run into evil while we imagine we still are battling for the right. I never knew a harsh tongued critic who would admit that he was more than simply frank. No miser believes that his miserliness is anything other than commendable economy or prudence. Intemperance is styled conviviality, and lewdness goes under all sorts of euphemistic pseudonyms. The infamous Alexander Borgia had a host of plausible excuses for his crimes. Indeed, there would be few convicted criminals were men allowed to justify their own misdeeds. It is no safeguard or guarantee of virtue that a soul can find argument for

the thing it wants to do. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man; but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Which brings us naturally to a closing thought. Moses never saw the Promised Land except as he was graciously permitted to catch glimpses of it from the summit of Pisgah. He spent the best part of his life going up to Canaan, but just as it lay beneath his feet a restraining hand was laid upon him, strength failed, and eye grew dim. The results of wrong are never perfectly outgrown. Our bodies, according to the findings of physiology, are renewed every seven years; yet on my hand is a scar which I have carried for more than twenty-five years. Renewal of the body fails to obliterate the mark. The scar abides by, or in spite of, the renewals of the body, to tell its grim story. One of the most famous of recent athletes found himself suddenly disqualified for contest as the result of a trifling ailment in childhood. Many a man has been ren-

dered incapable of loyalty or loving as the penalty for indulgences of years ago. A certain eminent writer declares that his whole mental life was poisoned by a single salacious story heard in his youth. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Be it beauty or ashes, truth or lie—"that shall he also reap." No reasonable being can find fault with such a law. On its permanence and universal sway we base our choicest hopes. That each type reproduces itself is the glory of the universe. If, then, we some day find ourselves shut out from fields our feet were longing to press; if at the testing we prove unfit; if the path of glory turns off abruptly just as the goal looms into view, we can only blame the present follies for whose indulgence we find so many a fluent excuse.

IX

TOO EASILY CONTENT

Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.—John vi, 26.

TOO EASILY CONTENT

THE popular movement recorded here has passed into a proverb. To characterize an ignoble zeal we have but to refer to it as being concerned with the "loaves and fishes." Yet superficially, at least, that ancient concourse was complimentary enough to turn the ordinary head. Most men are satisfied with any following, whether the crowd be after bread or truth. Comparatively few ever distinguish between a popularity which merely flatters our vanity and a popularity which lays us under obligations to be finer men and women. It is enough that folks seek us out and hang upon our word and wait our favoring nod.

Such is our frequent mood; and in nothing does the uniqueness of Jesus more strikingly appear than in the utter absence of demagogy from His life. Crowds meant nothing to Him except as they afforded opportunity to deliver His

Father's message. I have tried to imagine what heartache must have come to Him as He realized that the very throngs which followed Him on Palm Sunday with boisterous acclaims would be shouting for His death when they found what path He trod. Neither the obsequious visit of Nicodemus nor the complimentary speeches of the lawyer could win a responsive sparkle from His eye. He realized with a terrible certainty that would have turned His ministry into a three years' agony but for the glorious issue of it all, that few would receive the grace they professed to be so anxious to secure. Such is the background to this picture of the multitude seeking Christ. Our text is the answer He gave.

I am sure He must have been glad to see the approaching throng. It was good to look into the faces of the men and women for whose spiritual enrichment He was giving His life. His welcome shone in His eyes: as a woman thrills at the

sight of the man who may never guess her love: as a mother rejoices at the home coming of her ungrateful, wayward boy. It was sweet to count over the peasants who had fed on His bounty the day before. But alas, they had missed the lesson He came from heaven to teach. They had looked no further than the miraculous multiplication of the loaves. They had carried away His kindness without one look into His pitiful heart. They had not even guessed the diviner wonder He stood eager to perform. And now they had come again; not for blessing but for bread, not for their souls' but for their stomachs' sake, beggars of bounty rather than suppliants of grace. They did not know Him yet. The greatest miracle He could accomplish, according to their thought, would be to take away their carnal hunger or restore some withering limb. And when at length He had succeeded in banishing all poverty and pain His mission would be through! He was

merely a Healer of bodies, a Dispenser of bread!

Yet you say it was something that the multitude should come to Him at all. And so it was. It is something, doubtless, for a mendicant to touch the hand of benignity, even to receive an alms. It is something to have a beautiful mother though one only eat her bread and accept her care. It is something to be citizens of the American Commonwealth though we never look beyond her commercial and industrial advantages. And hence I agree that it is something to come within the radius of Jesus's influence, though it be only to thank Him for some temporal provision or ask a new loaf of bread.

I know unchurched men who would not think of retiring to rest at night without kneeling to lift an acknowledgment to God the Giver. I remember a wealthy man who had spent a fortune upon self-indulgence, and had literally gone around the globe to find some unusual pleasure,

who confessed to me after his conversion that never once during the years of wantonness and shame had he dared to close his eyes at night, however late the revel, till he had breathed afresh the "Now I lay me" of his childhood. Now and again I am amazed to hear a thorough worldling proclaim the overwhelming goodness of the Lord. And when I pause to consider how many beneficiaries of Heaven have not the decency to do even that courteous thing; when I think of the friends who, surrounded by ten thousand tokens, yet admit no evidence of Hand divine; when I realize the corrosive materialism of the age in which we live, I am grateful to every man who even thanks God for his daily bread.

But he who has sought God for bread only has failed to see the Father's heart. It is as if one should go to hear Paderewski play merely for the sake of watching his fingers move; as if one should reverence a Lincoln for the patronage of

office; as if one should enter a cathedral simply to see the frescoes on the walls. God is more than an exhaustless storehouse. He is infinitely diviner than a dispenser of sun and shower. No man knows anything about the miracles of God until the man himself is new by the miracle of grace. To come away from God with only our hands full, to believe in Him as a sort of Insulator against perdition, to "wait on the Lord" without getting our strength renewed for nobler living, is to miss the best glory of life.

Here was the blunder of the multitude that came to Jesus of old. It never seems to have occurred to them that Jesus could bestow diviner gifts than loaves and fishes. Every loaf should have been a lens. Every fish ought to have taught of heaven. The Master had given them the miracle as a "sign," an intimation of the openness of heaven, a provocation to ask immortal bread. In a higher sense than we use the word, He was trying to

reach their hearts through their stomachs. And His grief, to which the text bears witness, was that, after all His pains and patience, they had merely learned to come to Him for bread. Loaves were the latch to open the door into God's presence; stupid disciples who thought that the latch was all!

But the same mistake runs through the universe. I remember, so vividly it seems but yesterday, a certain Monday caller of my father's. He always gave me a silver quarter when he came. Somehow I never could think of him as other than a dispenser of shining quarters. And to this day the image lingers—the image of a silver-haired old man who carried quarter dollars for little boys. I now know that he was a man of large affairs, an influential factor in the church, a master of courtesy and kindness who might have taught me wondrous lessons; and yet so dominating was that other image that when, recently, I met a friend of his, the first vision to

come back was that of a kindly-faced old man who gave me silver quarters.

A celebrated orator used often to refer to the little New England schoolteacher who laid her impress upon his manhood. There were other instructors who heard his lessons and rapped his knuckles, and he felt toward them as most of our modern schoolboys feel toward their teachers—looking upon them as a sort of necessary evil, willing to cheat them into a false rating as occasion offers. The reason for the preeminence, in his memory, of that humble, sad-faced woman was that, in answer to some winsomeness within herself, he had brought to her not merely books but boyhood. He had gotten somewhat besides book knowledge from her. He had touched the deeper secret of an instructor's mission. He had learned manhood while reciting the rule of three. And clear down to his latest days he ceased not to give her praise.

Victor Hugo's Valjean tells the same

great truth. You recall that when Jean turned in at the Bishop's gate he was merely begging bread. Unkempt, unloved, unashamed of his filthy rags, driven from the dog-kennel into which he had crawled to sleep, asking no larger gift than a crust and a corner alone, he had come to the friendly door. The Bishop would have been good enough, according to Jean's standard, if he had merely honored the petitioner's importunate appeal and given him plenty of bread. And when Jean made off with the Bishop's plate he was simply taking a little more of what, in his cynical heart, a Bishop was good for. That, however, was not the end of the story. The Jean Valjean who stands forth in the later pages of the book, one of the finest characters in all the range of fiction, had found a new use for the Bishop. He had appropriated somewhat more than bread and meat. He had discovered forgiveness to be diviner than pity. He had touched heaven in the good

old man's tenderness. And he came from that second audience a new creation.

Have you paused to consider why there are so few loves like that of Robert Browning? Not because poets are few, but because only here and there is a man who knows how to treat his wife. I have no idea that Elizabeth Barrett was the queenliest woman that ever lived. I suppose her married life included a thousand hundrum cares—buttons to sew on and meals to supervise. Domestic routine was not all poetry. But to Robert Browning wife meant more than seamstress, more than mistress of his home. He turned to her for life. He gazed through her heart into God's. He fused his own great genius at the altar fire of her love. He became a larger man because he knew how to evoke a woman's best and let it bless him. Not the poor loaves of conventional devotion, but the immortal loaves of woman purity and woman faith which find their way to earth through the life of

a good woman, he learned to ask and find. And may I say that, when we men begin to love as Robert Browning did, we shall find Elizabeth Barretts in many homes?

I can remember when my mother seemed to me the embodiment of useful graces. If a garment was torn, I turned to mother. Had the school day gone wrong, I confided it to mother. Was I head-sick, or heartsick, mother knew what to apply. I could not imagine how any lad could live at all without his mother. But only as I came to turn to her for more than bread and favors; only as I began to feel the domination of her gracious, beautiful life; only as I learned to call on her for the replenishment of my wasting courage and the reinvigoration of my trust in God did I begin to know what it meant to have—and lose—a mother. Oh, boys who have your mothers still, let them do something for you besides minister to your comfort and cook the things you like. You do not know the value of a

mother until you let her help you be more pure and true and strong.

And so I came back to our view and use of God. There are times when we come to Him for the silver quarters he gives. There are times when we treat Him as the Schoolmaster who makes us learn our lessons. There are times when we come cringing to heaven's gate for the crusts and creature comforts of God. There are times when we set our faces toward Him for the smoothing of our hard couches and the lightening of our pain. But the occasions on which we turn to Him for the things He loves best to bestow—an inward grace, a royal courage, an inspiration divine—are far too few, I fear. We have barely learned that God means aught besides bread.

What is your conception of "the riches of God?" Beecher has a remarkable sermon on that theme. All the splendor of his rhetoric and the warmth of his great heart are there. Yet I turned away from

its perusal with a sense of disappointment. I had missed what I was looking for. Not the "cattle on a thousand hills," nor the wealth of all the mines, nor the possession of the stars that "fill the heavenly train" constitute the riches of the Lord. You can no more compute His treasure with a table than appraise the value of a clean heart in dimes and dollars. It is as far beyond analysis as is the flash of an opal, the glisten of a star. It is as irreducible to lower terms as a couplet of Tennyson or a melody of Bach. God is rich in those powers which fructify in human heart soil; those voices by which he addresses wayward lives; those tendernesses which by reproduction in our souls make earth brighter. "I do not mean to ask whether your God has a great deal of hand power. I do not mean to ask whether he can make stars as boys make snowballs. I do not mean to ask whether he can think a great deal and put thoughts together in endless logic—but is he rich in soul? Is he rich in

those directions which Jesus opened when He 'made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men'?"

Jesus added very little to our conception of the omnipotence of God. He performed few miracles more marvelous than are the wonders of science to-day. If you were in quest of amazement I would refer you, not to the books of the Bible but to the works of Darwin and Spencer. You may get a vaster impression of Deity from among the whispering pines or beside Niagara's rush than you will ever get from Jesus. But when He took little children up into His arms—and they were not afraid; when He let a poor hunted Magdalen read forgiveness in His face; when He broke Peter's heart, not with a thunderbolt but with one tender, all-sorrowful look, He gave the world visions of the greatness of God that will last until the ages are done. Not loaves but love, and loaves as the finite expression of in-

finite love, was Jesus's "revelation of the Father."

We must have some such truth as this to interpret for us the providences of God. There are multitudes of men who will believe in the goodness of the Lord so long as their granaries are full and their health unbroken. The children of Israel had no complaint to make until they grew tired of the simple camp fare. You remember the devil's sneer at the apparent piety of Job. "Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." Into nearly every life there come seasons when a man has to estimate God's mercy in other terms than those of bread or bank stock. Many a Christian has sat in the ashes of his former prosperity and bitterly tried to figure up how much God cares. That is where our creed breaks

down. We can understand why panic overtakes the dishonest merchant. We have no fault to find with the scheme which deals out disease germs to libertines and drunkards. It is explicable enough that death should stalk into some unprepared homes. But when bankruptcy assails a George I. Seney, when disease cuts off a Colonel Waring, when death grins in at windows which lie widest open to the glory of God, we know not what to think.

Our tables must be wrong. We have no warrant to appraise God's pleasure in us by the length of our bank account. We have no business to proceed upon the assumption that the greatest thing God can do for His children is to make them sleek and strong. We must stop trying to measure His kindness by the number of loaves He sends; the completeness of His love may sometimes deny the loaves for which we cry.

It took me a long time to discover that

my mother had not ceased to love me when she denied my fervent wish. I used to think her refusal of my prayer was proof of meanness on her part, and I have gone out of that mother's presence with angry heart and scowling face. Ah, the very best proof of waning love she could have given would have been by always piling my plate with the edibles for which I lusted, and gratifying my low-lying whims. Because she loved me she almost broke my heart.

Would God that we could lay hold of this marvelous truth of the Kingdom! Since there are finer gifts than lands and bullion, the Father may withhold the one in order to give the other. I have known souls that had emerged from the furnace, at length, only brightened by the fire. Multitudes of men and women have been cleansed of earthmarks by the rivers of sorrow whose flood threatened to engulf them. Astronomers would know of the glory of the heavens had they never lifted

their telescopes by night. So in most wonderful ways

> "—darkness shows us worlds of light
> We never saw by day."

It was the same Christ who multiplied the loaves one day and declined to do so the next day. Evidently He had more important business than the mere feeding of hungry mouths. He left unhealed more sick folk than He restored. In all His miracles He was trying to give hints of the still greater things that He would do. To make us pure in heart, to open for us the kingdom of heaven, to fill our hands with brotherliness and benedictions, may be worth a denial of the bread.

And this brings me to a closing thought. It is the custom on Thanksgiving Day to count over our temporal blessings. Thanksgiving dinner is a sample of the kind of gifts we praise. From bulging garners and prosperous homes and blithesome hearts goes up the Thanksgiving hymn. What about the finer gifts

of God? If we have only gotten from Him bread and butter, health and wealth, we are poor indeed to-day. Let us make, rather, an inventory of spiritual gains. If we are richer in heart than we were a year ago, if we have grown in the graces which inherit the kingdom of God, if we have mastered a few of the lessons which help set up heaven on earth, we have the most significant and far-reaching reason for the observance of Thanksgiving Day.

X

THE SOUL'S PSYCHOLOGIC MOMENT

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.—Isaiah lv, 6.

THE SOUL'S PSYCHOLOGIC MOMENT

THIS old admonition falls upon modern ears like the once familiar, but half forgotten, cadence of a song. Time was when such a scripture roused the deepest emotions and brought the sweetest peace of human hearts. Such texts were, within the memory of man, the characteristic foundation of all evangelical sermons. The old-fashioned Gospel invitation had an imperativeness, a fine entreaty, which netted magnificent results for the visible kingdom of God. Men groaned in spirit and fairly ran to Christian altars lest the divine invitation should be withdrawn. But the old appeal fails to stir men as formerly. Like some quaint hymn or ballad, kept as a sort of relic among the more dashing modern music, this old Bible melody is apparently outclassed by the more philosophical compositions of our day. Few start nowadays at the suggestion that "the king's business requireth haste." We

are too well informed, according to our preceptors, to believe that the Divine Spirit is likely to withdraw His presence or His appeal. We are assured of the constancy and imperturbability of God. We no more expect Him to be swayed from His beneficent purpose by our stubbornness than we expect the sun to stop shining because motes and ephemera fly up at it. Whatever God is to-day, in proximity and kindness, He always has been; He always will be. It is quite as impossible for men to get away from Him as for balloons to soar out of our atmosphere. The doors of the divine Heart must stand forever open because that Heart is divine. Therefore all this insistence upon seeking the Lord while He may be found, and calling upon Him while He is near, is only calculated to frighten children. There is no such thing as the special presence and appeal of God. So declare the liberalists of the day.

And before I attempt any sort of an-

swer to this current modern creed I desire to utter a word of generous praise to the scientific spirit which has helped to alter all creeds. It is, indeed, a cause for profound rejoicing that we have ceased to believe in the capriciousness of God. So far as she has helped us to burst our traditions and broaden our conceptions of Deity, Science has wrought a beautiful work for us. We have left behind a lot of the hobgoblins and nightmares of primitive faith. It is only a few years, comparatively, since men commonly supposed that earthquakes were express indication of divine displeasure—like the shaking which a justly irate parent occasionally gives his son. No less a man than John Wesley preached eloquently on "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes;" attributing such seismic disturbances to the outbursts of a righteously angry God, and seeing relief from such visitations only in the amendment of our ways. We do not expect to "cure" earthquakes to-day, for

we have learned that such upheavals are part of the marvelous process by which God has fitted the earth for man's habitation. It was once an accepted theory that weeds are the curse pronounced upon an unholy soil. Many a primitive believer has read the record of a divine impatience in the rank growths of his farm or garden. We now know that these luxuriant things are "Nature's green manure," "the most economic stuff in its way that she could produce and use in order to the deposit of vegetable mold, out of which should come in future ages the rich fruits and grains and grasses for man and beast." You will occasionally hear a great storm referred to as the agent of God's anger. Modern thought, however, declares that the storm-wind is part of a beautiful economy which cleanses the atmosphere and purifies all seas. But for the gusts and whirlwinds which sweep land and ocean the air would soon become too fetid for human-kind to breathe, and

the sea a mere "lagoon with reedy banks and stinking waters."

I have sometimes wondered that the Puritans could love their God at all. They apparently lived in momentary dread of being caught in some flagitiousness of conduct and whisked away to judgment without time for tears or prayer. They scarcely dared to believe that God would repeat His overtures to men. Hell was the fitting abode of such as disregarded Heaven's first call. Getting to heaven was not so much the consummation of God's thought, the end and glory of age-long redemptive movements, as a piece of famous luck, a sort of grim surprise to a vengeful and suspicious Deity. The very best mood with which theology once credited the Creator was a fitful, nervous compassion which, at any moment, on the merest pretext of a reason or without any reason at all, might be withdrawn. Today, we believe in a Heart whose most anxious yearning is for Magdalens and

wanderers. We have invested God with a tenderness which outlasts all human deformities and derelictions. We have framed a mother's face, with its unutterable longing and inextinquishable pity, and magnifiying that image through the lenses of our tears we whisper, "God." We have learned to distrust all creeds but His who came to walk men's dusty lanes, to heal their excuseless hearts, and finally to hang upon their cruelest gift repeating, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

It is part of our glorious privilege to live in a day when such things are preached; to believe in the constancy, the tireless activity, the superb unruffled calm of the Father; and I have a generous word for the part which modern thought has played in declaring such a Father. But there is more to be said. "God, you say, is eternal and immutable. If by this you mean that there never was a time, and nowhere is a place, empty of His agency,

it is most true. But if you mean that His agency is everywhere and always equal—that it cannot be encountered more or less—that it is the same in the life of an angel and in the gravitation of a stone—that there is for us no nearer to Him and no farther from Him—you give expression, I believe, to the largest falsehood that can be framed." Is there a change*less*ness which proclaims His deity? there is also a change*ful*ness of aspect which proclaims Him still more divine. Is there a constant outflow of His grace, unchecked and unreserved? there are also majestic ebbs and flows, "tides of the spirit," as Martineau calls them, to lave and cleanse our souls. Is it the part of Deity to meet our varying moods with fixedness and strength? it is no less His part to meet those moods with special pains and sweet concessions. Whatever God may be in the ultimate essence of infinite being—Absolute, Unconditioned, The Eternal Now, as the philosophers

sonorously describe Him—yet, as He comes to us in revelation, as we catch glimpses of His nature, He is sometimes stern and sometimes tender; here the Judge and there the Father; now far and to-morrow near. So that, for all the practical experiences of life, this old admonition is urgently true: "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near."

Let us look into the reasonableness of the matter. Changelessness is not the highest attribute, even in nature. Some one calls the moon a "howling wilderness of desolation." Without a summer, without a winter, without a song or a bird, no streams to wash away its grime, no cloud to intercept the sun, frozen or baked and indifferent to either, it goes swinging through its path around the earth. They count no years there. The Face in the moon has stared out into space for cycles of ages. What a relief to come back to the region of varying scene and alter-

nating skies! We may well be glad that our fields are sometimes green and sometimes gray. We should weary of nightingales and roses were they less rare. Because earth is both cradle and sepulcher, because the most gorgeous sunset is painted at the back of a retreating storm, because we cannot even forecast the color of to-morrow's skies, we cling with growing wonder to our earth-home. Its mystic spell, its endless delight, its pique to heart and mind lie chiefly in its changefulness.

The finest functions of the human body are changeful, intermittent. There is no intermission in the action of the lungs or beating of the heart. Digestion and assimilation go on day and night, year in and year out the same. In normal health we are rarely conscious of these vital operations. But the action of nerve and sinew, the energy by which we go forth into the world to take our place and fulfill our mission, the movement which proclaims our grade above plant and mollusk,

is intermittent. The strongest man can work but a certain number of hours without sleep or relaxation. One can read himself blind by simply forcing the eye to do without intermission what it was intended for and loves to do. No soldier can stand in the fighting line indefinitely: the bravest soul will turn coward unless allowed to rest. Change is part of the necessary order of physical well-being.

But this truth is even more emphatic in mental phenomena. There is in our mental powers an astonishing ebb and flow. In proportion as the mind touches higher ranges than does the body is it more fitful and difficult of control. Everybody knows that an ordinary mechanic can work more consecutive hours than a student, and with far less vital expenditure. Nor is it commonly possible to distinguish the work of the mechanic to-day from his work of yesterday or to-morrow, whereas the author who at one sitting produces fine results may be as unprolific as a

stump the next time he sits down to write. The same orator will one day carry an audience clear off its feet with tumultuous excitement, and next time talk it to sleep.

Some years ago there stood in this pulpit a man whom I have considered the greatest living preacher. Yet the crowd who came to marvel went away disappointed. To them he seemed far from great. Nor was he great, in any sense, on that particular occasion. Notwithstanding his reputation for genius he barely escaped humiliating failure. Indeed, I heard a friend of his say recently that, of all the sermons he had heard the celebrated clergyman preach, that sermon was certainly the poorest. Such must be, more or less, the experience of every man who depends upon his brain to fulfill his mission. There is no patent method for quickening thought. Sometimes ideas will come as doves to waiting windows: sometimes there will not even be the rustle of a wing. Sometimes the poet's heaven is

open and alive; again, it is as brass. It may almost be said that according to the arbitrariness and intermittency of genius one may generally affirm its grade.

Let me reverently suggest another illustration. I suppose we should naturally expect the life of Jesus to be an uninterrupted calm or a stately, unhindered toil. Surely, if the divine ideal of human life were a life of monotonous level, an absence of ups and downs, a sea without a tide, Jesus would thus have lived. His ministry, on the contrary, has left a totally different impression. No manhood but His ever swept so vast ranges. His life psalm was not played on the middle notes: it touched the extreme upper and lower registers of human experience. He went from the deepest shadows of the valley to the most dazzling splendor of the mount, and back again. A single week of His ministry included both palms and cross. Did He cry out for the removal of the cup? it was only to seize it again,

with exalted frenzy, as the Father's choicest gift. His life was full of interruptions, of ebb and flow, of light and shade. It holds not a hint of the gospel of changelessness which modern philosophers are preaching. But Jesus not only patterned our life, He showed us "the Father." And we come back to the declaration of the text with heightened reverence and appreciation.

One of James Lane Allen's later books has for its title the creed of its hero, *The Reign of Law.* That was all he could see in the universe: unpitying law; law irreversible and conscienceless. The world order was to him, and presumably to the author of the book, a heartless procession of events. There was no Face to meet his advances or to frown away his sin. But, as his heart began to break up under the suns and frosts of love; as the power of a new truth got hold of him, he looked up into heaven to whisper at length: "Ah, Gabrielle, it is

love that makes a man believe in a God of love." Not that God is ever capricious, but that His heart can go forth in special overtures to His children; not that He ever really hides His face, but that it sometimes breaks like the conquering sun through our earth-mists: not that He ever ceases to call, but that sometimes His voice has new resonance and music—this is our Christian faith.

And in such a faith is the explanation of movements like the Great Awakening and the Wesleyan Revival. There was more than Jonathan Edwards in the one and John Wesley in the other. These prophets had been caught in the outrush of God's love at its flood. They were obedient to a "heavenly vision," but the impulse was divine. Sometimes a human love bursts its banks and overflows a neighborhood. Sometimes a mother's sacrifice seems to gather energy like a pent-up stream and goes forth in such lavish *abandon* as makes its object stand

amazed. On some such wise does the divine solicitude seem to break forth in special endeavor to win His recreant children. Christ Himself is the perfect phrasing of this truth. God had never been far away. Paul declares that "He hath not left himself without a witness at any time," and John writes concerning the "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;" but Jesus was the more intimate approach of God to man. In a sense in which the truth could not have been affirmed of any preceding age, God had come. He was "near." He who had been always speaking, and from whose pleading no soul had ever been able to get completely away, spoke at length in a voice that has filled the aisles of nineteen centuries with sweetness, the voice of the Son of Mary.

Thus, to one age and yet another, in measure great or less, God makes some fresh appeal, and it becomes the unique glory of that age to hear what God has to

say. History is full of such special interpositions and salvations. Sometimes, when hearts were most numb with their despair and seers no longer saw visions, when the night of waiting grew so dark that even the stars seemed to have gone to sleep, out of the darkness and waiting there came a word, a flash, to herald the coming day. The experience of most believers is on this wise. There is a sort of Christian life which has no thrills and knows no moments of despair. It plods on without special uplift, without undue depression. God is never really near; He is never far away. But the finest souls tell a different story. A professor of mine used to say that the man who never flats never sharps. Whether or not it be true in music it is certainly true of human life. The soul which never feels despair never knows great exaltation. I discover that those who have had mountain-top experiences have acquaintance also with the mists and chill of the valley. The men of

strongest faith have had the severest struggle with their doubts. Faces which show the saintliest light have often gathered it amid the shadows. Every Christian life has its ebb and flow. Travelers who have climbed Mount Washington say there are days when, even on that great summit, one can scarcely see his hand before his face, but there are other days when the vista is mile upon mile. So, for the eye of faith, God is sometimes so far away you can hardly reach Him with your prayers; again, He is so near you can almost touch Him with your hand.

But this truth has another important bearing—its bearing upon conversion. Nothing is more certain than that a man may live on for years without becoming conscious of any special appeal from God. Nothing is sadder than the fact that a call once heard and slighted may never come again. Hosts of men and women have turned away from the voice and vision of the Damascus road without asking what

God would have them to do, and have never heard the voice or seen the light again. I do not attempt an explanation. I know men who have gone out of the world with the supreme agony of having sinned away their day of grace. That is a haunting scripture which declares, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone." It seems as if there were a climax of divine entreaty beyond which God cannot go. Thereafter He appears to let us alone. Whether it be because God has ceased to speak, or because our ears have grown too heavy to hear, makes little difference in effect. The horror of conscious separation is the same. There is a near and a far with God. It is the part of supreme wisdom to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to call upon Him while He is near.

Whether, then, God's advances be toward our generation as a whole, or to our individual lives, we can by no means afford to trifle. There is a strategic mo-

ment in all divine opportunity. Nothing else is so important as to welcome the special overtures of God. To hush all else that we may the better listen; to move more close that we may not only hear His voice but feel His presence; and then to be "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision"—this is the foremost thing. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

XI

AN UNCANONICAL BLESSING

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him. . . . And he gave him tithes of all.—Genesis xiv, 18-20.

AN UNCANONICAL BLESSING

ABRAHAM'S life was a series of starts and surprises. Our acquaintance with him begins with the astounding word which disturbed his uneventful residence in Ur and sent him forth, a pilgrim, "not knowing whither he went." I do not suppose he was any more consciously ready for his call than most men are for the larger purposes and holier vocations to which God summons them. The commission came as a sort of stern surprise. Or, take his experience in Egypt. Abraham went down into that country expecting to be abused, maltreated. He had no confidence in the kind of men who dwelt there, no hope of courtesy or chivalry for Sarah. So he worked out the lying story which later got to Pharaoh's ears. And when Pharaoh displayed a manhood quite up to the grade of the mistrustful patriarch, when he sent for Abraham and restored the beautiful Sarah with a stinging rebuke

for the husband's deception, I can fancy the latter's surprise. Or, take the amazing promise of a son; the dramatic scene with Isaac; the unsuspecting entertainment of three angels, and a half dozen other noteworthy incidents in his career—all full of "marvel and surprise."

Abraham must have learned to live his life in a mood of tense expectancy. Each moment was sacred because out of it might flash the ray of some fresh revelation. Each path was holy, for down its dim distance might appear a new messenger from God. Each door was precious: it might open into the presence of the King. So lived this ancient pilgrim: dreading nothing so keenly as stagnation; wondering ever to what new test the Lord might summon him; always watching, yet invariably surprised.

It is one of these surprises which furnishes our present lesson. Abraham, as you will recall, was just returning from his act of summary vengeance upon the

marauding kings. The indignity to Lot had been terribly avenged. A new "world power," as the newspapers would say, must henceforth be reckoned with. Abraham had done his work with the sort of unapproachable fury which sometimes characterizes the prosecution of a righteous cause. According to the custom of his day he had wiped out his enemy, and laden with the spoils of conquest, escorting his inglorious but delivered kinsman, he was returning home. Somewhere in the way this fresh surprise occurred. An impressive figure came out to meet him; a personage of evident dignity and station; a man who spoke the language of courtesy and truth; an unclassified priest of the same God whom Abraham served. Whence he came the patriarch did not know, nor ever learned, so far as the record shows. Whither he went was equally obscure. How he had been ordained and when commissioned did not appear. This much only was certain: he

came, he bestowed a blessing, he was gone. Except for an unrelated reference in the Psalms and a doctrinal use of this episode in Hebrews the Bible gives us nothing more. A solitary priest, without caste or ecclesiastical credentials, crossing Abraham's path to give a blessing and hurry away—such is the story. Yet in so short a story there is rich material for heartening lessons and strong rebuke.

Three particular characteristics of this visit we may notice: its opportuneness, its mystery, its purpose. First, then, its opportuneness. To be met in the road as Abraham was met was beautiful. He can hardly have been free from a certain hardness of heart on the homeward journey. Butchery tends to make men butchers. I have heard it said that, after she has once drawn the blood of deer or moose, the gentlest woman becomes fairly bloodthirsty for such sport. It is hard to eradicate from one's veins the fever of conflict. Abraham was in danger of

returning home uncooled, unsweetened; ready to seize the weapons of a carnal warfare at a moment's notice; making of life itself a long, weird battlefield. Picture, then, this gracious figure in the path, a reminder of brotherhood and Heaven, standing with bread and wine outreached, waiting to bestow a blessing and be gone. Abraham must have been a different man as he passed on. A sort of melody had driven out the din of strife; upon his life there rested a lingering sanctity, like the tender memory of a mother's soothing touch; a perfect flood of day had broken through the clouds; his bitterness was gone—all because a gracious soul had met him on the way.

It can hardly be difficult to realize the value of such breaks in the chapter of struggle. Our inveterate tendency is to become professional. The heroic hardens into habit. We forget to unclinch our fists. We become so used to dealing blows and swinging sledges that we scarcely

know how to stop. We come back from life's firing line to wear the fighting face. Blessed be the influence which breaks in upon our professionalism to keep us human! I have heard men speak thus of books. One of my professors used to point almost reverently to certain well-worn volumes on his shelves. To them he turned when the tension of the days became too great. Back to their unequivocal voices he would often come from the chagrins and disappointments of the class room. Down into their freshness he would plunge his superheated soul as into a mountain spring. Then he was ready for his task again, a kindly, patient brother. What will not a few strong pages, a few fine stanzas, do for a troubled mind! The man who does not know the companionship of books has missed one of the choice secrets of human ministry.

Or, let the Melchizedek who waits in the path be some familiar friend. I do not believe that any man can be his full self

without some one to cool his anger or to rekindle his slumbering zeal. It is well to frame our moods in the calm judgments of another, to measure our passions against the dispassionateness of another soul. A man may never realize the meanness of his conceptions until he finds them rebuked in the face and counsel of a familiar friend. The confessional has met a distinct human need. Say what we will about the dishonesty of priests and the impiousness of certain of their claims, the Roman Catholic confessional really answers a heart cry. Millions of souls would doubtless have made worse shipwreck but for the harbor lights hung out by priestly warning. Men have gone into the confessional ablaze with fury and come forth remembering Calvary. Many a woman has to thank God for the "word in season" spoken in a confessional. Friendship is a valid confessional. Pity the man who has not one to which he can go. The most saving thing that can

come to a distempered life is often the calm, tender message of a friend.

What miracles of transformation a little child can perform. The marvels of Manuel in Marie Corelli's story are matched in countless households every day. I have seen a man come home from business tired and exasperated. It would not take much of a spark to produce combustion. He is looking for trouble and annoyance—though he may wait until the minister departs before he begins to make things move. And I have seen his baby climb up into his arms and with all the sweet insistence of a child commence her blandishments; I have seen the care lines commence to disappear, the threatening clouds to scatter, the stern face to relax. In a moment a transformation was effected. By the grace of a baby's touch the man was changed.

During the New York draft riots in 1863 a violent fellow headed a certain crowd uptown. Bent on the direst mis-

chief he rushed up the steps of a conspicuous residence on Murray Hill, exhorting his pack of roughs to follow him. But at the head of the steps he paused, irresolute. A quiet, sweet-faced woman was standing in the doorway. For a moment they stood looking into each other's eyes, his ablaze with indiscriminate fury, hers clear with unutterable calm. Then the miracle of kindness happened again, and as the malice faded from his face he shouted to his companions, "Stand back there, men; I'll kill the first one of you that puts a foot upon these steps." And with a reverent bow he turned away.

Ah, but all these are merely suggestions of the way Jesus crosses human paths! At the most opportune and vital moment, when hearts are strained to breaking, He meets us in the way. One of the women who stood most reverently at His cross, and later brought spices to His tomb, was a hardened soul when He first met her. Zaccheus, according to the accepted inter-

pretation, was a well-detested Shylock, clamoring for his pound of flesh, until Jesus called him down from his eyrie in the sycamore tree. John the beloved might have continued to be "a son of thunder" but that Jesus met him and revealed to him a fairer type of manhood. Peter was only a common fisherman, plying a drudging trade, until he caught the image of a new ideal in Jesus's eyes and words. The great apostle of the Gentiles was the man who had once come from Jerusalem "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" and had met Jesus on the road. This is the eternal ministry of Christ, to be our priest forever "after the order of Melchizedek;" to meet us in our vengeful paths; to find us in our hatefulness and sin, and to leave with us His blessing.

For a second suggestion of this visit of Melchizedek to Abraham, notice its mysteriousness. The patriarch was totally ignorant regarding the ecclesiastical antecedents and spiritual authority of the

priest who met him upon the road. So far as we are concerned, he was, as Scripture affirms, "without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." He came like a flash out of the dark. He was simply a man of benignant face and celestial bearing. He bore only a humble gift and a significant blessing. And in a moment he was gone. But what grace Abraham would have missed had he insisted upon analysis and certification before he accepted the blessing. I almost marvel that he did not wait—such would have been the modern way. We are skeptical concerning every gift which is not labeled. We insist upon knowing the baker's name and the chemical process of the yeast before we are willing to taste the bread. We demand the natural history of a flower in advance of admitting its sweetness. We repudiate a thousand blessings whose sole fault is that they are uncanonical, unvouched for. We have fallen upon a hypercritical and carping

age, and unless we mend our ways we shall forfeit some of the choicest experiences of human life. In Abraham's case the mystery was nothing against the validity of the blessing; the blessing bore its own credentials.

It would be hard to name any great realities which are other than mysterious. Men sometimes talk as if religion were the chief breeding place of mystery; as if facts and forces were generally understood except within the realm of religion. No falser assumption was ever made. It is hardly possible to name a natural law which is unmysterious. All the phenomena of life are thick with mystery. And the much vaunted scientific spirit, so bepraised in our age, has in reality multiplied mysteries; starting up a dozen new ones for every old one explained, impressing us more and more with the unconquerable mystery about and in us. It may be true in a certain sense, as James Lane Allen affirms, that "there is not the slight-

est evidence that nature has a secret;" that "we have no evidence, as the old hymn declares, that He loves to move in a mysterious way." It may be ultimately true that "what we call the secrets and mysteries of the universe are the limitations of our powers and our knowledge." But for the practical uses of life such fine phrasing is mere verbal sophistication. Science has indeed furnished names, but names are not explanations. To name a mysterious power is by no means the same as dispelling its marvel. Gravitation, electricity, life, these are merely names—names of temples whose threshold no explorer has passed.

It is the fashion to talk of the man who "discovered" gravitation. But what did he discover? A mystery. This age has no more definite idea what gravitation is than had the compatriots of Pliny. We have simply given a name to a power which "passeth knowledge." We have marked a few of its paths, but we no more

understand the force which holds the universe together than the bystanders understand the thoughts of a prince who is passing by. No eye has yet seen the chain which holds the planets to the sun. No telescope has revealed the framework on which the universe is built. Men stand with their hats off, if they are wise, confessing that they marvel but do not understand. The mystery remains. Electricity is as great a mystery as ever. We have discovered, to be sure, many things that it will do. We have learned to make it do traction service, and bear messages, and print pictures. The last decade has discovered a way of making it reveal the inmost secrets of our bodies. Notwithstanding all of which revelation the mystery abides. I venture to affirm that, in the real presence of this power, Edison is as self-confessed an ignoramus as the boy who brings his morning paper. The "wizard" may harness electricity and use it to immortalize his name, but how it per-

forms its wonders, "whence it cometh and whither it goeth," he cannot even guess.

Biology has taken great leaps in the past few decades. The modern man knows things that his forefathers never even dreamed. What marvels the botanist is able to perform! What beautiful processes he has laid bare! What indescribable wonders he has expounded! Modern surgery is simply marvelous. Men have so painstakingly observed the laws and phenomena of life that they are able to cheat the "king of terrors" of many a tempting prey. It seems as if modern surgery could do almost anything, except to put a man through a meat-chopper, and restore him safe and sound. But who dares claim to understand life itself, whether the life of a flower or life in a human body? It may be true, as Allen says in the passage from which I have already quoted, that "there is nowhere a sign that the Creator wishes to hide from us even what is Life. If we

ever discover what Life is, no doubt we shall then realize that it contained no mystery." That prophecy may be true, but life itself is still absolute mystery and seems likely so to remain. How life can be, what its constituents are, what powers control it, no voice can affirm. Jesus used this same argument with a specimen doubter of His age. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth." So with the processes of the Spirit: the power is encountered in one's path; the splendid force is felt; life's fetid air is cleansed—but the mystery remains. God's agents for the purifying and exaltation of human hearts are nearly always mysterious. Man is not conscious of their approach. He does not discern their issue. He simply feels their power, acknowledges their presence, and, like Abraham in the meeting with Melchizedek, accepts the blessing. The spirit of modern science is in

many aspects worthy of all praise. But it is well to remember what Jesus said to Thomas one Sunday evening. "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they which have not seen, and yet have believed." In that characterization is the finer than scientific spirit. It is possible to lose blessings by asking too many questions. Certain gifts must be accepted for what they obviously are—as a true man accepts a true woman's love, not the analyst but the lover. To ask nothing so earnestly as that God's will may be done in us "as it is done in heaven;" to throw open one's whole life to the mysterious action of holy agents; to wait, like Abraham of old, for some Melchizedek to bestow his blessing—is a topmost attainment.

One other feature of that ancient visit remains to be noted—its purpose. Melchizedek came out of obscurity to enrich a pilgrim's life. Having enriched it, he passed on. I might pause to say that was

enough. To help some brother man to live; to mitigate another's pain; to give some wanderer a song for the night season, is privilege rare indeed. Earth holds no richer opportunity than the opportunity of helpfulness: "even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Just now, however, we are looking at the truth from Abraham's standpoint. Hence I affirm that Abraham's all-important business on that occasion was to make sure of the blessing which Melchizedek had brought. No man has learned to live until he has learned to take lessons from any hand which offers. The world is full of ministers of grace, but few of us, alas, know how to treat them. We call them "pain," "adversity," "struggle." But to name them such is to merely half name them. They are somewhat more than the words imply; they are messengers from God. "All things work together for good" to those who believe in the alchemy of

heaven. The true genius of life is to find opportunity everywhere: seeds of promise in any soil. When the elder Storrs was in the senior class at Andover he received a peculiar appointment to preach. A classmate, in splitting wood, had sent the ax through his hat. Hats were scarce in those earlier days, and in despair the young theologue said to Storrs, "See what I have done. . . . I shall split my head open next. You must go to Braintree and preach for me next Sunday." Storrs went, and filled the place with such acceptability that he was promptly invited to become the pastor of the church. After some deliberation he accepted the call, and for a ministry of sixty-two years he served that congregation. Referring to the occasion which first brought him to the pulpit, he used playfully to say, "I went through the hole in that hat to my lifework." That was his opportunity. How many would have recognized it? It is one chief mark of genius

to know opportunity when it comes, and to seize it.

So with the harder experiences of life; like unyielding shells, they may hold rich meat. It was dark, indeed, for Jacob when night shut in by the river Jabbok. It grew darker yet, as night wore on toward morning, and he seemed to have waged a losing battle. Yet weakened, breathless, he clutched, and cried, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." It is no wonder that the next verse records the blessing. For such a spirit it will always be written, "He blessed him there." Such is the deep philosophy of reverent, earnest living. To find gems among the gravel which hurts our weary feet; to wring comfort from the most ungenerous conditions; to discern the way to heaven through blinding mist and storm—this is the consummate achievement.

XII

NOT WASTED

And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? . . . Jesus said, . . . Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.—Mark xiv, 4, 6, 9.

THIS pledge of Jesus has been literally fulfilled. The fragrance of a single box of spikenard has sweetened nineteen centuries. Some one calls attention to the significant fact that Jesus erected three monuments to humble goodness. The first immortalized a "cup of cold water . . . in the name of a disciple;" the second glorified the smallest contribution on record, a widow's two mites; the third is described in this story of the spikenard. An uninvited guest had come to Simon's supper. According to St. Luke, she was one of the scarlet women whom Jesus had forgiven. With faltering step and averted face, knowing there was no room in Jewish respectability for her, expecting possibly to be driven from the feast, yet obedient to the commanding impulse of a reawakened soul, she had brought the gift of spikenard to Jesus.

Not, perhaps, until the rich odor of the

ointment filled the room was her presence noticed. Then eyes grew dark and voices hard with anger. Indignant, unforgiving hands were ready to drag her from the place. One Face alone was kind, one Look compassionate. A moment more and Jesus had glorified the gift. "Let her alone, . . . she hath wrought a good work on me. . . . She hath done what she could. . . . Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached . . . this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." How small and mean her critics must have felt!—like the cartoonists and defamers of McKinley the day after he was shot. But to the woman that wonderful word was worth all rebuff and scorn. For love was justified, and all its sweet extravagance forever pronounced sane, when Jesus affirmed the immortality of the gift of spikenard.

It is a shallow thought which finds here a promise of remembrance merely. Evil also has that. Jesus might have made to

Judas the same pledge He gave to this penitent woman. Wheresoever the Gospel has been preached, the betrayer has been remembered. An immortality of fame is one thing—the woman's critics have it in the very paragraph which records the woman's gift. Nero will not be forgotten so long as Paul's martyrdom is remembered. Tetzel is as sure of a place in universal history as is Luther or Melanchthon. If to be remembered was all that Catherine de' Medici asked, she well earned the right to that. Side by side with Lincoln's name will go down to posterity the name of the man who slew him. A hundred years from now school children will be studying the virtues of William McKinley, yet the very page that bears his unsullied fame will be fouled with the mention of his assassin. One of the proverbs declares that "the name of the wicked shall rot;" and in a certain sense the proverb is, doubtless, correct. Unfortunately, however, "the name of

the wicked" fails to rot out of the memory of man. Fame and infamy contend together for everlasting recognition. An immortality of remembrance is one thing, the immortality of love is quite another.

Hence I affirm that what Jesus promised to this woman was not a bare immortality of remembrance. The key to His meaning is found in the preceding verses. There, as you will recall, the critics had condemned as waste her fragrant gift. They had figured up the loss in pennies. They were ready to reproach the Master for not staying the woman's lavish hand. They had no measurements for supreme values, no scales to weigh fine motives. And when Jesus assured them that "wheresoever throughout the world" His Gospel should be preached the woman's gift should be remembered, He was simply affirming the glory of that gift. According to His word, the three hundred pence were not wasted but were turned to divinest use! That all good-

ness and kindness are immortal in results, that every real sacrifice bears fruit through everlasting years, that no truthful history can ever be written without including the widow's mites and the cup of cold water, is the message of this old scripture to modern men.

With such a truth only can we meet the widespread skepticism which phrases itself in Shakespeare's familiar lines,

> "The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones."

Such is the statement of a common creed. More widespread than the doubt of God is the doubt of the efficacy of goodness. Wherever a toiler goes reluctantly to his task, wherever a soul would rather be amused than grow, wherever a Sunday school teacher is skeptical regarding the value of his work, there is the spirit of infidelity—the doubt of goodness. One reason why it is so hard to convert the sensualist from the error of his way may be found in the fact of this infidelity. He

thoroughly doubts the practical value of a self-renouncing life. He knows the effect of a glass of liquor, he can feel its thrill in his nerves. He can appraise, definitely, the pleasure of his most sensual hours. Even though he should happen to lose at the gaming table he comforts himself with the thought that he had at least a chance of winning. The fruit he lives for grows near the ground, within easy sight and reach. And before we can help him strain up toward the higher fruit of life we must convince him that the higher fruit is real.

Or, take the matter of benefaction. The reason why most young people would rather invest a dollar in a theater ticket than in the missionary cause is because they doubt the real worth of the latter investment. A ticket to the theater represents a definite quantum of passing amusement, a missionary receipt for the same amount of money expresses a dubious expenditure. Just so long as a

thousand dollars in the bank looks larger than the same amount distributed among God's poor, men will continue to bank their money. But the moment you convince a man that benevolence yields better interest than do stocks and government bonds, that moment Shylock is transformed into a Peabody or Peter Cooper. It is evident that Andrew Carnegie has been poring over this lesson. The great Shaftesbury had mastered it when he began in earnest his marvelous philanthropic career. Wilberforce believed it, and dedicated his whole fortune to his cause.

So, also, with respect to service more distinctively religious. Every pastor experiences difficulty in getting church members to work. The Sunday school superintendent's labors would be materially reduced if he had not to fairly go on his knees and beg Christians to take a class. Let a rescue mission be started, and there will be plenty to pass the door,

but few to lend a hand. Even after Christians are once set at work the difficulty is not past. It is almost as hard to keep them at work as to set them at work in the beginning. Few officials whose office is really laborious are willing to serve more than a single term. They are forever haunted with the impression that some one else ought to be allowed to try a hand. At the first opportunity, therefore, they beg to be let off. And so it will always be until church members get it thoroughly into their heads that the idler in the vineyard is a loser for every day of his idleness; that the more duties he escapes the more joy and enrichment he must miss. Thank God for the faithful folk who are always ready for labor, laying down no yoke except to assume another, bearing more than their share of the "burden and heat of the day," yet never wincing! They have learned the Master's lesson. They are persuaded that for every sacrifice and labor they are lay-

ing up treasure above. They have seen the gain of loss, and they break their alabaster boxes in full assurance that love's labor is never lost.

The immortality of goodness—it ought not to be so hard to believe. There is a host of hints to help our faith. Take, for example, the truth of conservation of energy. I suppose that modern science contains no more important doctrine. Men once viewed the universe as a colossal divine experiment in which more material was likely to be wasted than ever could be turned to good account. It used to seem too good to be true that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without the Father, and that the hairs of our head are all numbered. But science and theology have both waxed wise together. The universe, as viewed to-day, has a place distinct for the tiniest sparrow, and reckons with each hair of our head. Modern thought declares that nothing is really wasted, nothing is

finally lost. That which the mechanic calls lost motion is simply motion passed into something else. A bearing grows hot because part of the whirl of the revolving wheel has been converted into heat. The friction of rail which holds the express train back is another instance. The Indian rubbing two sticks together to get a spark is unconsciously converting one kind of energy into another, and the flash which finally rewards his labor is "lost motion" turned into heat. "That nothing be lost." The electric-lighting current in our streets represents a definite amount of coal and a certain number of dynamic coils. Nothing was really lost when coal passed into steam, and steam into speed, and speed into electric fluid. Conservation is constant and perfect.

Last year's fallen apples were not lost, they are represented in the sweetness and beauty of the present year's crop. No leaf goes sighing to the ground except as bearing the promise of harvests yet to be.

"Earth is a sepulcher of flowers,
Whose vitalizing mold,
In endless transmutations, towers
In green and gold."

The air, as botanists affirm, is charged with invisible seeds. Too small to be discovered by the unaided eye, moving silently and unannounced, mischievous in an economic sense, they are perfectly organized and marvelously endowed. They make the mildew and the mold. In unseen spores they are wafted upon every breeze, always eluding yet never lost; another illustration of God's perfect conservative care.

But this thought gains emphasis as we carry it up into higher ranges. Who today would dare to set a term to the vitality of a song or a canvas? The author of "Home, Sweet Home" did not dream that he was writing a song for the whole English-speaking race. He was simply pouring out his own heart. Yet his simple lines have been repeated in every hamlet where our native tongue is known,

and, translated into other languages, have gone on an evangel around the world. There must have been days in which chipping was dull to Angelo, and hues were all somber to Rembrandt, but the world to-day learns sculpture from the one and tinting from the other. Blind Homer, telling in all the villages of Greece the fame of his hero, little guessed that he was breeding heroes for his loved land. He was simply burning up with the fire of his story. Yet before a century had passed the Achilles of Homer's great epic was reproduced in the flesh and blood of thousands of young Greeks. That paradox of blended sweetness and cynicism, Charles Lamb, once wrote of his friend Coleridge: "He is absent but four miles, and the neighborhood of such a man is as exciting as the presence of fifty persons. To be within the whiff and wind of his genius is enough to keep us from possessing our souls in quiet." Henry M. Stanley was converted to his

supreme life conviction and work by the quiet, unassuming heroism of Livingstone. When they first met in Africa Stanley was, as he later confessed, as "prejudiced as the biggest infidel in London," but the silent majesty of the sacrifice of that other spirit mastered and awed and finally conquered his. "I was obliged to get away from him, or he would have made me religious in spite of myself," was the testimony of a famous English lord to the spell and potency of Fénelon's piety.

No wonder, then, that Jesus declares all goodness to be immortal. Character is the greatest of forces. Words have more vitality than seeds. Kindness is diviner than a painting or a song. If energy and seed and art are deathless still more is love, which is the life of God. Goodness, once born, is alive forever. Our loyalty, our faith, our love, constitute part of the eternal treasure of the ages.

Let this message, then, rebuke certain phases of our doubt. First, our skepticism as to the value of humble service. It is easy to admit the immortality of King Alfred's work and Grace Darling's courage, but to see one's own humble deed set in such splendid glow is quite another matter. I doubt if David realized that one of the most significant and far-reaching things he ever did was to pour out a cruse of water upon the ground. Circumstances made the occasion. He had cried for a drink from the well at Bethlehem, but when three friends came bringing the coveted draught he could not swallow it at all; he remembered the perils it had cost to gratify his mere whim. Those three devotees had fairly cut their way through Philistine ranks. That cup of water might have cost more than a cup of blood. David looked into the faces of his friends and poured the water, a solemn libation, upon the ground. It was a simple act. It could

not compare, in apparent importance, with his more notorious transactions. Yet it really does more to commend David to our day than do his martial victories and genius. It is related of Sir Ralph Abercrombie, the hero of Aboukir, that, mortally wounded, he was carried on board one of his ships and a soldier's blanket placed under his head. He expressed relief, and then asked whose blanket was at his head. "Only a soldier's blanket," was the reply. "Whose blanket, did you say?" he queried earnestly. "Only one of the men's," came a second time the reply. "I wish to know the name of the man to whom this blanket belongs," he persisted. "It is Duncan Roy's, of the Forty-second, Sir Ralph." "Then," said the dying general, "see that Duncan Roy gets his blanket this very night. He will be cold without it, and I shall not need it then." Such are the deeds which bring heaven and earth near together. The

goodness of a great heart does not need a trumpet. Humble kindnesses have sanctified more soil than ever holy water. The reverberations of a live, loving word sweep round the world and up to the very throne of God. Let it be remembered that the two mites of an obscure widow have inspired the giving of nineteen centuries.

Henry Ward Beecher pours forth the torrent of his eloquence to the memory of a little unnamed teacher buried somewhere in the Connecticut hills. "There came to Litchfield," he says, "when I was about eight years old, a tall and slender creature. Her name I have forgotten, if ever I knew it. So delicate and attenuated was she that the sun seemed to shine through her. She moved so quietly about the schoolroom that it was as if a bird were flying in the midst of a tree, from branch to branch. Whereas before, in that hateful old schoolhouse, I had been cabined, and cribbed, and curbed, and

pinched, and whipped for not learning what was not taught me, there came this specter of a human being whose eyes were lustrous of another world and whose heart was full of gentleness and richness. Nor can I remember that she ever opened a book to me. I can only remember her as a dream; but I feel to this hour, and distinctly, that many of the things which I say to you were born in me out of the influence of that woman, who, if I mistake not, taught in that school but a single summer. I have long been preaching, and it may be said that many preachers who have gone forth from this church have derived influence from me; and they, in their preaching, are unconsciously and unknowingly indebted to her. She lives in a strength that never dies, born again in each generation of men who carry forward the influences that she brought to bear on my heart."

What a tribute to a humble toiler!

Could that teacher have lived to hear it she would have been richly recompensed for all the hardship and privation of her lot. Could she have looked ahead to the day in which Beecher should thus speak his gratitude, what heartaches she would have been spared. Yet that is precisely what we must do. We must look ahead, we must hear beforehand, if we are to work with joy. All faithfulness has eternal quality. Nothing of the teacher's care and pain is lost. No caressing word, no anguished prayer, is ever offered in vain. A mother's sacrifice and sublime investiture must live. This is God's world, and no element of faithfulness is too small to be caught up by Him who said of old by the sea, "Gather up the fragments . . . that nothing be lost."

But this same comforting assurance has a bearing upon the sufferings of life. It is said that the distress of the oyster produces at length a pearl. A single grain of sand is swept inside the shell and

lodges against the delicate fibers of the tenant. At first the oyster attempts to dislodge the intruder, but failing of this pours forth a certain fluid which encysts the irritating substance, transforming it into a pearl. If the oyster could drive out the hurting sand it would never yield a pearl. Nothing beautiful or true was ever born without a birth-pang. The old theology was utterly false which declared that the pain of travail was evidence of the divine curse. Travail is an essential of the divine plan. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. Blindness helped Milton to see. Bunyan might never have written his immortal allegory had he not been flung into Bedford jail. "Poets learn in suffering what they teach in song." Thus may all suffering be transfigured as it becomes the birth agony by which some fresh truth, some new kindness, is born into the world.

Still another application of our lesson

is needing to be made: to the untimely ruptures and severances of human life. Death is not all loss. It may be the prolific mother of untold blessings. The male bee dies in the very act of giving himself to the queen of the hive. It is written of Samson that "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life." Nor is this an isolated truth concerning Samson. It was also true of Huss and Latimer and Lincoln. I believe that coming years may show it to have been true of McKinley. It is transcendently true of the Man of Nazareth. His cross has been the fulcrum on which God has lifted a world. A crucified Christ has broken and remade the hearts of untold millions. The results of all sacrifice are safe, even the supreme sacrifice which men call death. This is God's world. Goodness cannot die. Time has no tooth for love. Death is often the breaking of the alabaster box, whose breaking perfumes the world.

XIII

THE BLIGHT OF JEALOUSY

And, behold, Miriam became leprous, white as snow.—Numbers xii, 10.

THE BLIGHT OF JEALOUSY

THE whole story of Miriam, as recorded in the Bible, is not a long one. It may be written in a few terse phrases. Our first glimpse of her is during the days of the oppression, by the side of an ark of rushes. She it was who has been appointed her brother's guardian, to watch the issue of a last desperate expedient to save his life. How well she watched and how prudently she discharged her mission is known of all. We catch another glimpse of her just after the crossing of the sea, when Pharaoh's horsemen lay stiffening on the shore. It was Miriam who took up the theme of Moses's jubilate and led the women's song: "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horseman and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." Save for the incident which led to the tragedy of the text we could pass nothing but compliments concerning Miriam. But, alas for

human ideals! the text is an integral part of the story. The Miriam of bondage and of prophetic gift became Miriam the leper.

Bible biography holds nothing back; suppresses no vital part of the story. This is one of the evidences of the divineness of the Book—it describes men as they are. When God undertakes the portraiture of men He gives us faithful likenesses. He permits us to see the blemish as frankly as the beauty of ancient worthies. Father Abraham is not commended to our admiration as an ideal of excellence. Moses's mistake is named as fairly as his courage. David's claim upon our attention does not consist in an assumption of spotless living. So with Miriam the prophetess. Years disclosed other qualities besides those for which we praise her. Her disposition may be best described as "jealous." For years, however, we get no glimpse of it. She had been content to shine by reflected

glory. It had been honor enough for her that she was the sister of Israel's leader and lawgiver. I can imagine her pride in her distinguished brother. But with the passing of the years there crept in another feeling. Somehow she could not bear to hear his name so often. Each fresh evidence of divine preferment for her brother laid a cold dagger against her heart. A different mood from that in which she had watched his cradle yonder, and that in which she had joined her psalm with his, had taken full possession; and after the fever had burned a while within her bones it burst forth in an act of disloyalty and meanness which nearly cost her life.

Miriam was jealous, that was all. Yet I am sure that Miriam would have been the first to disown the fault. As matter of fact she laid all the blame at the door of the woman whom Moses had married. This is the common *modus operandi.* The jealous person is the very last to ad-

mit his own jealousy. He fancies that everybody is wrong except himself. This foulest of all poisons usually gains unsuspected entrance to the human heart. The "green-eyed monster" wears all manner of fine liveries and badges. Against no common sin, perhaps, are we so poorly armed. There are certain diseases whose first inroads are rarely noticed, and whose characteristic symptoms are mistaken for the evidences of health. Thus it often happens that the consumptive fancies he is getting well. The victim of apoplexy has just been boasting of unusual vigor. "I am better now," is frequently the last utterance of a dying man. Vice is by no means "a monster of so hideous mien" as we sometimes fancy. More often it approaches us in the guise of familiar friends. And what is true of sins in general is preeminently true of the sin of jealousy. The victim of jealousy will be more likely to believe himself guilty of any other sin.

I have heard women say, when every line of their faces was shaded with green, and the monster was fairly leering out at their eyes, "I am not jealous: I am only hurt."

What a type of jealousy Othello furnishes as he stands in the bedchamber of Desdemona. For days his heart had been growing hot with jealosy, until now, under the skillful fanning of Iago's diabolism, his whole being was ablaze.

> "I had rather be a toad,
> And live upon the vapor of a dungeon,
> Than keep a corner in the thing I love
> For other's uses."

Such was the expression of his insane mood. He was mad with jealousy. Yet as he paused, glowering into the beautiful face of his much outraged wife, he fancied himself a high minister of justice.

"It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,—
Let me not name it to you, yon chaste stars!—
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood;
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow.

Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light:
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can thy former light restore,
Should I repent me:—but once put out thine
Thou cunningest pattern of excelling nature!
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have plucked
thy rose
I cannot give it vital growth again.
It needs must wither—I'll smell it on the tree.
O balmy breath that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword!"

Think of that fury as calling itself by the name of justice! Yet such is the common mood of jealousy in the presence of its own foul crime. So I am not surprised at Miriam's defense of herself. She was but illustrating the spirit from which Shakespeare drew his lines—a spirit perpetuated in countless breasts to-day—when she denied her heart's own offspring, her jealousy of Moses.

There are several suggestions to be drawn from this old picture. First, the unnaturalness of Miriam's jealousy. I assume, though Scripture does not affirm

it, the identity of Miriam with the child who, years before, watched over her helpless charge as he lay in his cradle of rushes. I wonder if now her thoughts traveled back to that early scene. How anxious she had been for Moses. In those days nothing was too good for him. Let him be spared and she would be proud to be his slave forever. Yet he of whom in his maturity she grew so jealous was her own brother over whose bulrush cradle she had cried and prayed. What a commentary on the revulsions of human sentiment. To be sorry for the misfortune of another is often easier than to be glad in his power and plenty. To bear, without bitterness or cavil, the elevation of a friend is a searching test of manhood. And it sometimes happens that the test grows in severity in proportion to our intimacy with those who pass us in the race. I know men who are secretly envious of the triumph of their sons; women who, contradicting the very law

of motherhood, begrudge to their own daughters some superior charm of face or manner. Philip II was accused of poisoning his own son from jealousy. The Borgias turned against the very creatures themselves had advanced to power. Never shall I forget the day when my father, near the close of his life, knowing that his best years were past, looked into my face and repeated the words of John: "He must increase and I must decrease." I knew it was hard to say, but I am just beginning to realize how hard it must have been. I remember that as he spoke his lip quivered and a strange solemnity was in his voice. It hurt his magnificent manhood to think of turning downhill. And he would not have been quite human unless, despite his wonderful love for his children, he had felt a twinge of secret pain.

It is said of the famous English clergyman, Venn, that in his declining years he was removed to the obscurity of a coun-

try parish and a stirring young curate was employed to assist him in his work. Sentiment was not slow to declare itself in favor of the younger man. Nobody wanted to hear the old man preach, while the curate attracted surprising congregations. Naturally the rector's family grew jealous. They could not bear the advancement of a junior above their honored father. But the arrows were quenched in a boundless ocean of charity, for with true Christlikeness the old man said, "Carry me to hear him preach. God honors him and I will honor him. No man can receive anything except it be given him from heaven." Such is the Christianity of Jesus. We may measure our religious grade by our ability to rejoice in the triumphs of another. No man has the mind of the Master until he can be as glad in the flowers that fringe a neighbor's path as in the blossoms along his own. How many business men can be even mildly pleased at the success of

their rivals across the street? How many women are able, without streaks of envy, to see new furniture moved into an adjoining house? How many church members and pastors are really happy in the abundance of a neighboring vineyard? Not many? Measure, then, the distance we have yet to travel. "Whereas there is among you envying . . . are ye not carnal?"

But I notice a second characteristic of Miriam's jealousy—its unfairness. It was doubtless true that, but for her watching by his cradle, Moses would never have lived to become a leader; but it was also true that, apart from the achieved greatness of her brother, Miriam herself would never have been heard of. Moses's victory it was that furnished a theme for her song. Because Moses was leader her prophetic gift had ample scope. As the sister of Moses she was accorded full dignity and honor. Yet the day came when, forgetful of all this, she dared to raise sedi-

tion against him. There are certain ferns which thrive only under the branches of some wide-spreading tree; what impertinence then if the fern should boast itself against the tree! Gehazi won all his prominence by his position as servant of Elijah. Xenophon might have lived and died unknown save that he had a greater than himself to exalt in his *Memorabilia.* Jerome Bonaparte was made by his wonderful brother. So throughout history, and modern life as well, we find countless men and women who owe all that they have and are to others nobler or stronger than themselves. What would probably be the distinction of the present generation of Vanderbilts apart from their inheritance of millions? Who would have heard of "Fred" Grant but for the fame of his illustrious father? Is it probable that Robert Lincoln would ever have been made minister to England except as the son of our "Father Abraham"? Most of us have derived our chief advantages in

life from the toil and prestige of others, and it would seem that the crowning pitch of human hatefulness were reached if ever we allow ourselves to boast against them. I know clerks who have outstripped in the commercial race their former employers. A few years ago they were grateful for the privilege of clerkship at a mere pittance a week. They owe their present fortune, under God, to the men who took them in and gave them a footing in the business world. But now that they are rich and famous, they simply prove the smallness of their manhood by the arrogance with which they treat old friends whom they have distanced. God bless the man who never forgets the shoulders on which he rose to power!

Somewhere I have read of a girl who asked her mother to adopt the rôle of servant during the visit of a few stylish city friends. Ashamed of her own mother! Ashamed of the hands that had toiled themselves hard to render life easy

for her! Ashamed of the back that had grown crooked carrying the children! Ashamed of the wrinkles cut by a torrent of tears! Ashamed of one's own mother —God forgive the son or daughter who is guilty of that! Let her be aged and unlettered and deformed, still she is mother. When Abraham Lincoln neared New York on the way to his first inauguration, accompanied by his mother, he confessed to a boyish nervousness. And as the train slowed down amid the cheering throngs the old lady called him to her. "Abraham," she said, "I must fix you up a bit for these city folks." She was a little body, and Lincoln, to facilitate the proceeding, lifted her tenderly upon the car seat. Standing there she combed and caressed his hair, then arranged his necktie afresh. "Do I look nice, now, mother?" he affectionately inquired. "You'll do, Abraham," was the reply. And he kissed her and lifted her down. Most men would have felt cheapened by

the occurrence. It was different with a man who could reverently affirm, "All that I am I owe to my angel mother." Other things being equal, no man was so fit to be President as the man who could say that.

So, whichever way we look, this same truth holds. The greatest soul is the quickest to acknowledge its obligation to agents human or divine. Royal manhood is clear above the possibility of repudiation of its debts. Wendell Phillips says that in early life the conviction seized him, "You belong to God." Upon the logic of that conviction he built his splendid life. As years brought power and honor he still remembered his indebtedness to God. "You belong to God;" Phillips says that was the greatest discovery he ever made. Would that we could make and help others to make it! One grievous fault with the present age lies in its secret or open repudiation of obligation to God. Men use God's laws as a scaf-

folding to build their palaces. They climb up His strength to fame. They draw their treasure from His storehouses. But, alas, when they are strong they incline to deny the Heart which supplies the currents of their life. The worst of all jealousies is jealousy of God.

But a further element of Miriam's attitude appears. She was utterly unwilling to see her brother rise more rapidly than herself. It does not seem to have occurred to her that the most signal honor would accrue to her as she helped her brother. Nothing is falser than the gospel of success most commonly preached. We fire our boys with ambition to be great. We dazzle the girls with visions of Florence Nightingale and Rosa Bonheur. Yet the plain fact is that the social structure cannot be all towers and steeples. Most of the material must go into foundations; into the backing and filling of the walls. There must be a hundred stokers below decks to every captain

on the bridge. There must be a thousand clerks to one Wanamaker. Only one man can be President; it takes millions of citizens to make the nation. The social millennium about which we airily talk will never come, can never come. So long as the world shall stand there will be grades and distinctions among men, and the next best thing to being individually great—may I say, the final test of greatness—is to serve somebody else. The greatest Son of woman "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "I am among you as one that serveth," was His description of Himself. The unique greatness of Jesus is in the fact that for nineteen centuries He has continued to exalt and glorify others.

The Great Dipper, according to a legend, was once a cup in a little child's hand. During the terrors of a fatal drought a lass had gone into the woods in search of water. Her quest was rewarded, and she was about to raise the dipper to

her lips when she suddenly remembered that her mother was also parching with thirst, and she started homeward with the water untasted. On her way she paused to pour out a few drops for a poor half dead beast—and the dipper turned to silver. Reaching home she gave the water, untasted, to her mother, who in turn refused it—and the dipper turned to gold. Just then a stranger knocked, to ask for a sip of cold water, and the cup was handed to him. Immediately the dipper became studded with seven jewels and passed into the sky. Thus, according to the story, the starry Dipper is merely the miracle of unselfishness. "Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." What a company of immortals!

"They have no place in storied page,
Nor rest in marble shrine;
They are past and gone with a perished age,
They died and 'made no sign.'

But work that shall find its wages yet,
And deeds that their God did not forget—
  Done for their love divine—
These were their mourners, and these shall be
The crown of their immortality.

"O seek them not where sleep the dead.
  Ye shall not find their trace;
No graven stone is at their head,
  No green grass hides their face.
But sad and unseen is their silent grave—
It may be the sand or the deep sea wave,
  Or a lonely desert place;
For they need no prayers and no mourning bell;
They were tombed in true hearts that knew them
    well.

"They healed sick hearts till their own were
    broken,
  And dried sad eyes till theirs lost sight;
We shall know at last by a certain token,
  How they fought and fell in the fight.
Salt tears in sorrow unbeheld,
Passionate cries unchronicled,
  And silent strifes for the right—
Angels shall count them, and earth shall sigh
That she left her best children to battle and die."

But I have not yet emphasized the tragedy that came to Miriam. As somebody observes, a foul mouth was recompensed with a foul face. Even as she

stood beside her brother the terrible leprosy attacked her. Such was the penalty, in her case, for jealousy. To her the punishment was written where the world might see. If leprosy were the inevitable penalty for jealousy the world would be a lazar house. That the curse does not usually appear on face or neck is no mitigation of its blight. There is a leprosy of heart, and jealousy begets it.

> "O jealousy,
> Thou ugliest fiend of hell! thy deadly venom
> Preys on my vitals . . . and drinks my spirit up."

I believe that jealousy has slain more brave hearts than have war and pestilence combined. Let us give it no room. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure . . . think on these things." To believe the good instead of the evil; to be glad in all the health and prosperities of others; to serve the present age in any capacity or status—this is the Christian rule of life.

XIV

THAT WISDOM WHICH IS HID FROM THE WISE

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.—Luke x, 21.

THAT WISDOM WHICH IS HID FROM THE WISE

This scripture affords us one of the few permitted glimpses of the emotional life of Jesus. With all our knowledge of His gracious words and deeds we are, for the most part, denied access to the sanctuary of His feelings. On the rarest occasions only was His heart laid bare. At the grave of Lazarus, and again as He came up to Jerusalem, according to the simple narrative, He "wept." In the interview with the centurion, and later, when His own city discredited Him, He "marveled." As the shadow of a cross loomed ominously near, the record declares that He "was troubled." From that cross His heart broke forth in one piteous appeal. But these, taken with the exultation of our text, are almost the only exhibitions of His emotion. His life was too rich to permit cheap displays of feeling. It is the shallow nature which car-

ries its heart upon its sleeve. It is the unresourceful soul that goes peddling its joy or its grief. The child who cries loudest at the breaking of his toy is soonest comforted with a new one. The man who bubbles over with extemporaneous delight will be most depressed when skies turn gray. It is that passion which, rather, spends itself within the soul, feeding like an unsuspected worm, glowing like a subterranean fire—that passion proclaims the deeper life.

> "Such a tide as, moving, seems asleep;
> Too full for sound or foam,"

bears the commerce of great hearts.

The background of our scripture is familiar. The seventy had just returned from the fulfillment of their first commission. They had been practicing the lessons learned in companionship with Jesus. Anxiously, no doubt—as children who hear the home door close behind them, as graduates in theology or medicine who face the hard realities of de-

pravity and sickness—they had gone forth at Jesus's bidding, and after an experience which must have been full of increasing marvel they had at length returned "with joy," as the record says. I can imagine their enthusiastic story. It had been part of the joy of their labor, while separated from Jesus, that they would have something beautiful to tell Him when they returned. A triumph is sweetened by being shared. It is doubly pleasant to travel if there be friends at home eager for every descriptive word. It seemed to me that college endeavor had lost its spur when I could no longer bring back my trophies for a mother's generous praise. Even the Master lived in full view of a moment in which He might be able to say, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." So I can easily imagine the gladness with which the returning seventy recounted in Jesus's attentive ear their victories. "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us."

"In that hour Jesus rejoiced." The phrase is a swift glimpse of the Master's heart, Not the emotions of the disciples but the emotion of Jesus, His gladness at their recital, is what appeals to us just now. I deem it not irreverent to say that Jesus had commissioned the seventy as an experiment. Only by testing could He prove their aptness. Only as they went forth from His tutelage to grapple with the problems of the world could He be sure that they had mastered His lessons. And when they returned "with joy" to tell of conquest His heart was full. The choicest moment, I believe, in a teacher's life is the moment in which he beholds his pupil successful, honored of men. Not long ago a principal emeritus of one of the New York schools was telling me with what love he had followed his old pupils, and how his heart rejoiced as one after another had come to distinction. With pride unutterable he named them over and I could see the thin face shine.

He counted it worth growing old to share their glory. To know that he had planted the seeds which bore such precious fruit, to witness such vindication of his lavish care and skill, sufficed to transfigure old age for him. Chancellor McDowell tells a story of a New England farmer who pinched and saved for years in order to send his son to college. It was a long and trying battle for the father. Days there were in which the farm toil seemed unendurably severe and the sweat fairly scalded his brow. But the years were past, at length, and with his wrinkled old wife he went up to the lad's Commencement. The atmosphere of the place seemed to feed his old heart, and as he walked through the famous halls, hearing everywhere the praises of his son; as the doors to the future swung back for one glorious view, he turned to his wife and said, "Wife, I reckon the education of that boy is the best investment I ever made." Everybody remembers the prom-

inence given to Mother McKinley at her son's first inauguration. What a wonderful day it must have been for her! Only a mother can guess its full meaning. The years must have come back in vivid panorama—the toils, the pains, the tears. How she had prayed for the son who stood there before her, the chosen of a people. And as the sense of victory swept in like a tide upon her, a mother's victory not less than his, I fancy that the old heart could scarcely bear its joy. Somewhat of all this, and infinitely more, must have been in the Master's heart as the seventy came triumphantly home. His tutelage had not been wasted. His pain and sacrifices had passed into their manhood. Endowed as they had been with a more than mother's love they had justified His gift. Every victory of theirs woke echoes in His soul. As the Scripture phrases it, "in that hour Jesus rejoiced . . . and said, I thank thee, Father."

But Jesus's joy was more than a mere

gratification with the success of the disciples' exploit. Their victory had not been the victory of strength. They were unlearned fishermen and peasants, owing little to the culture of the schools. They were men who had entertained His truth and opened their lives to His life. Their real equipment was an inward grace and the power of their Master's name. Yet, such men as they were, they had been sent forth to establish a kingdom. I am sure that Jesus must have realized the worldly folly of the experiment. He lacked every weapon the world has commonly used to gain its conquests. He could not muster an army. He could not even give alms. All He could do was to say to troubled souls, "Be of good cheer," and to a Magdalen, "Go, and sin no more." With such accouterment, in a sort of sublime audaciousness, He had sent forth His "little flock." Fancy, then, what it must have meant to Him that the seventy could return and say, "Lord, even the devils are

subject unto us through thy name." It meant a new mode of conquering the world—"by kindness." It stood for the ultimate establishment of a kingdom of sympathy and helpfulness. It heralded a day to which, after nineteen centuries, we still look forward, a day in which the nations shall no longer lift up the sword against each other; "neither shall they learn war any more."

Alas! we are still far removed from the victory in whose spirit Jesus rejoiced that day. We have not yet half tried His method. We are still attempting to beat the world at its own game and on its own territory. After nineteen centuries of Christian teaching, we continue to put more confidence in thirteen-inch guns and high explosives than in the power of a kind word and a helping hand. Minister Wu pointed out, with rather exasperating frankness, that we evidently do not take ourselves seriously in the use of the Golden Rule. The sting of his remark lay,

unfortunately, in its truthfulness. I do not see how, at the time, he could have reached a very different conclusion. With war in Africa and turmoil in the Philippines, both waged by leading exponents of the Gospel, and nearly every one at home endeavoring to beat his neighbor at a bargain, it is hardly surprising that Minister Wu formed the opinion which he announced. That sentence in *David Harum* would never have been caught up and passed on by so many lips had it been other than the quaint crystallization of a sentiment to which few of us are strange: "Do unto others as they would do unto you." I have heard people say that homeopathy was perhaps good enough for women and children, but that a strong man needed medicine which he could taste. There is a deal of similar feeling with reference to the Gospel method of subjugation. Men doubt its efficiency in "serious cases." I have often heard it said: "Try kindness, if you will,

but when that does not succeed, fall back on the old-fashioned horsewhip."

God forgive us our skepticism! All abiding triumphs must be won in the spirit of Jesus. The trouble is that we are bunglers with His method. We have hardly given it fair chance to prove its excellence. You will recall that on one occasion Peter came to Jesus with this question: "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" Peter evidently considered seven a maximum allowance. Any offender who needed more than seven forgivenesses might as well be given over to perdition. Like most of us, Peter was willing to make a limited test of Jesus's doctrine, but he wanted assurance that beyond a certain point he need not try. What an answer, then, Jesus gave: "I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven." Such is the sort of Gospel with which Jesus had sent forth the seventy,

disciples: unlimited forgiveness, incessant helpfulness, unsparing love. And until we have tried the divine medicament of souls according to Jesus's measure we have small right to deny its efficiency.

A man was recently discharged from the employ of the Brooklyn Gas Company, but at the intercession of a prominent official he has been reinstated. He understands, however, that at the first lapse into his old habits the doors of the company are shut against him for all time. I am glad they have taken him back, and I pray God that he may show himself a man. But, even if he falls, that fall will not prove the futility of kindness. It might be too much to expect that a great corporation should continue to give him fresh trials, but this much is certain: that according to Jesus's prescription no man is to be cut off from sympathy until he has sinned and been forgiven seventy times seven. Men tell me that this truth is too pure for modern business; that it

needs an alloy of base metal to make it wear well among men. So it may seem —and selfishness helps it to seem so. But the millennium will never come until business and society and statecraft, not to say the Church of Jesus, are conducted according to Jesus's prescription. The miracles of coming ages will not be marvels of military science or wanton force, but miracles of helpfulness and kindness. Not armories, but asylums for the sick in body and soul, will be our glory. He that reclaimeth a life from beggary or shame will some day be really greater than the captor of a city. To cover, as with a mantle, a multitude of sins, will be the paramount achievement of the age that is to be.

A poor fellow in Cincinnati had become a common drunkard. He had forfeited all claims to decency. Disowned by his family, he had finally landed in the gutter. Occasionally, during sober intervals, he worked about the livery stable in

which a certain physician kept his horses. One morning the doctor laid his hand upon the fellow's shoulder and said appealingly, "Jim, I wish you would give up drink." The man's lip quivered as he answered, "I would give it up if I thought you cared, but between you and me there is a great gulf fixed." "Have I made any gulf, Jim? Think a moment before you answer." "No—you—haven't," was the hesitant reply. "If you had been a millionaire, could I have treated you more like a gentleman?" asked the physician. "No, sir, you couldn't," was the reply. "Then I do care, Jim." "Doctor," said the poor fellow, his eye brightening, "I am through with liquor. Here's my hand on it." And he kept his word. The miracle had been wrought afresh.

It is inspiring, too, to remember that it does not take a college-bred hand to practice the art divine. No scholastic diploma is required. The deputies whom Jesus sent upon His business were common

men. "Vermin," the aristocrats of Judea called them. But they did finer work than titular grandees and scholastic leaders because they wrought in the Master's name upon human hearts. A recent newspaper item gives the old familiar story of a family estrangement. Husband and wife had for years been separated. The divorce mill had ground its horrid grist and the man was about to remarry. During the interim he visited his little daughter, and she, unconscious of the full meaning of his long absence from the home, besought him with childish insistence to "come back to mamma." "What the law could not do" was accomplished by the pleading of a child. Her compelling love broke up the ice of years of misunderstanding and let two hearts flow together again. To complete the romance, the divorced husband and wife were remarried on the very day which was to have made him the husband of another. Sagely does the Scripture af-

firm, "a little child shall lead them." But the incident is only a sample of what the childlike spirit can accomplish. We are never so near the ideal of Jesus, never so well qualified for the service of the kingdom, never quite so potent and commanding, as when in simplicity, readiness, and trust we are most like "a little child."

But this brings us back to Jesus's exultation. "I thank thee, Father . . . that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." The words seem almost an affront to our scholarly and self-reliant age. This generation is especially proud of its versatility and science. The pulpit piles plentiful compliments upon the literary and technical achievements of the day. Yet here is the assertion that the philosopher who knows the largest number of other secrets may miss "the secret of the Lord;" that the master of scientific wisdom may be farther than the humblest

unlearned child from the kingdom of God; that the tallest and profoundest spirit, straining up into heaven and down into the deeps to find the Lord, may miss Him who is a "very present help." This is a hard thing to say in modern ears; hard especially for those who have expected to climb the ladder of shrewdness up to God. "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent."

What, then, is the meaning of Jesus's exultation? "Tertullian dwells with a savage satisfaction on the supposed exclusion from the kingdom of God of whatever we hold fair and great . . . and exults in peopling it with hoards of barbarians like himself. Is this the spirit of Christ's thanksgiving? Are we required, out of sympathy with it, to believe Socrates an outcast and clap our hands as he vanishes from hope? to stifle our reverence for Æschylus and Plato and declare God's preference for mendicant monks

and illiterate missionaries?" That were indeed a savage thing to say in the name of Christ. Here, rather, I believe, is His meaning, and it is as sweet as the smile He gave a Magdalen or the sorrowful look that broke Peter's heart. God is not a riddle to be guessed at last by superior shrewdness, nor is He the topmost rung on the ladder of busy scholarship. Least of all is He a treasure to be filched away by battering down all doors and breaking into heaven irreverently. God is near and now.

> "Closer is He than breathing
> Nearer than hands or feet."

And he who expects to find God otherwise than by quietly letting him come in misses the beautiful "secret of the Lord."

Here I believe is the taproot of modern skepticism. The mathematician is looking for God at the end of his intricate problem. The astronomer is staring after Him through illimitable spaces. The physicist is trying to dig Him out with a

lancet or chemical process. The philosopher is hoping to catch Him in the close network of his thought. And vast throngs of men are expecting God to show His face to their commercial prudence or worldly wisdom. In all such quest the modern seeker is on the wrong trail, the hopeless trail. No heart finds love by racing around the world for it. No soul finds peace by fighting. No spirit finds God by striving. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Love comes; peace is a gift. God breathes Himself.

Modern wiseacres often wonder what hope there is for common folks to find God at all. Just this most precious hope: that the man who is most likely to see God is the man who waits for Him as simply as a child. Many a poor laborer knows more about the kingdom than does the *savant* who pities him. Not because ignorance is best, and culture inimical to faith—though that is what our fathers used to say—but because the learned

thinker may use his profundity to bury his vision. There was nothing in Darwinism to make Huxley an unbeliever. He missed God by looking for Him in the wrong direction. Haeckel cannot hope to find the "Universe" anything but a "Riddle" until he changes the attitude of his scholarship. The childlike spirit is best. The supreme achievement of mature life is to hold the treasures of truth and power in a childlike heart. No character is quite so grand as that which preserves, in spite of change and stress, the perfect naturalness of childhood. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

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